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LOVE INTRIGUES.

—A—

DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS.

—BY—

L. LEOPOLD.

Entered according to act of Congress, in the year 1884, by L. Leopold, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

LAMBDIN & FURMAN, Printers,

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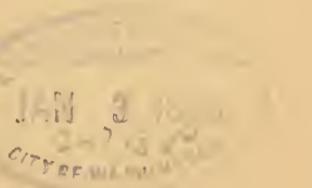
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LOVE INTRIGUES.

A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

LEONOR.....	a young lady from South America, afterward Mrs. Loudon
INEZ, (pronounce Enez).....	a companion to her
LOUDON.....	a planter
CLARA.....	his daughter
THOMAS.....	a blacksmith
MRS. THOMAS.....	his wife
CHARLES.....	their son
PASCAL.....	a banker
PRESCOTT.....	a planter
EDMONDS, }.....	young gentlemen
RICHARD, }.....	
HELEN, }.....	house-maids
BLANCHE, }.....	
TOM.....	an aged negro

Then, Ladies and gentlemen, peace-officers and people.

ACTION:—In a southern city of the United States and in various places in the country, a short distance from said city. PERIOD:—Before the civil war.

LOVE INTRIGUES.

ACT I.

SCENE 1.—*In the City; a room in Leonor's Residence*
Helen and Blanche afterwards Inez, Lenor and Pascal.

Helen and Blanche occupied clearing up the room.

Helen. We will soon have finished our work; and as for me, another such soiree could come off again.

Blanche. I would not like to see it, at least, not for some time to come.

Helen. I don't mind the little extra work, because it is otherwise very entertaining.

Blanche. That's all that you think of—parties, dances, and such things. Just see where your head is again; you don't lay the table covers straight; neither the rucks; you don't do anything right; you are so wrapt up in your fantastic ideas that you can't see straight out of your eyes.

Helen. I can't help that; because my eyes and mind are so full of the little of what I saw last evening, that, by right, I ought not to be blamed.

Blanche. I know what ails you; you ought to be one of those big ladies yourself, so you could put on a heap of that style, too, and ever so many airs besides; so you could look five hundred times during the day in the looking-glass; so you could see that every lock of your beautiful hair is at its right place; so you could turn your head in every imaginable direction. Wouldn't you like to have it so? But I am glad you can't; serves you just right.

Helen. And you, talk about yourself. You would be ten times worse. You would have two negroes all the time around you, just to carry along the trails of your dresses.

Blanche. Of course, I would! I wouldn't want to be out-done in style or in putting on airs by anybody; no matter who it is. I would have the best, the finest, and the dearest, if you please; but

as I can't have it, I try to be happy anyhow, and don't let those things turn my head, as they bother you. Now, what are you waiting for again?

Helen. I am waiting to hear you talk

Blanche. What a lazy thing you are!

Helen. What a tongue, what a tongue you have! I tell you, we needn't dust and clean up the rooms with brushes and dusters, for I am sure if I put you in any of our rooms, and you just let your tongue loose, with but little more force than you use now, you will see that the dust will fly out through the doors and windows like magic.

Blanche. If that is the case, it speaks well for me and I want my salary raised.

Helen. It would make you neither more nor less.

Blanche. Give me your reasons.

Helen. Have you ever looked at one of those big machines, with ever so many wheels, large and small ones, and how one great wheel drives them all?

Blanche. I believe I did.

Helen. That's just the world. It is a great machine; money is the power that keeps everything agoing; people are the wheels; they represent all sizes, and we are the little ones; and whether we get a little more money or not, we remain the same.

Bl. Then if our mistress don't want us any more she wheels us, she wheels us out of doors; for this reason is the world a machine, and for the same reason are we small wheels. I see your smartness comes in very handy sometimes.

Hel. There is Miss Inez coming;

Enter INEZ.

I suppose you want to surprise us.

Bl. You may come madame; the dance may begin anew, and this very evening, if it has to be.

Inez. I must say, girls, you have been very industrious. The most fastidious could find no fault; on the contrary, you deserve great praise for your diligence, and because you have put everything in its proper place again. I presume you have finished all your work.

Bl. About one or two rooms to clean up, or rather to look after.

Hel. Please, Miss Inez, oh please! if you don't mind it, do tell us something of yesterday evening's affair.

Bl. I, too, will rest awhile from my work, if you will be kind enough to do it.

Inez. To be candid, I know very little myself; because I was tired out before the soiree had begun; and while things went on, my eyes and mind were concentrated on just one thing, namely, that nothing should go amiss, because all depended on me and on my management. But worst of all, on such occasions, is the excitement one is laboring under; and when you think you are done

with one thing, immediately something else comes up, always much more annoying and complicated, and so it continues to the last.

Hel. You have done your part, fully.

Bl. I would like to know what Miss Leonor would do without you.

Inez. She tells me that often enough; but I don't mind it. I am doing all I can for her, because she is so good and kind-hearted.

Bl. Let us go now; you have heard enough; it is getting late, and we must finish our work.

Hel. Always work, work! you old scrubbing-brush!

Bl. You can hear the rest some other time.

Inez. Miss Leonor is coming; I hear her steps.

Bl. That settles you, with your nose always in everything.

[*Exeunt, Hel. and Bl.*]

Inez. Every day has its new tasks and duties; so pass weeks, so months and years, and in this manner we grow old, almost before we know it.

Enter; LEONOR.

Leonor. You are quite active again, Inez; you are not tired out as I supposed you to be.

Inez. All trouble is over, because everything passed off so well.

Leonor. I cannot pay you too many compliments, for without your care and management our soiree would have been a failure.

Inez. Thank you, Leonor; but my greatest pleasure is to see you well pleased.

Leonor. It is a great satisfaction to us that every visitor left our rooms so highly elated. Indeed, the most refined ladies and gentlemen of the city were present; and I received so many compliments.

Inez. Nearly everybody was taken by surprise.

Leonor. And most of them asked me whether all that was South American style.

Inez. They asked me the same question.

Leonor. Strange these people are, they take us to be barbarians, but we have cured them of their self-conceit, at least, this time, and in another sense we were right in giving our friends this reception, for during the whole season, as you know, I came in their society and was their guest, and how thoroughly we succeeded is apparent from the great pleasure we have afforded them.

Inez. You deserve a very high compliment yourself, because you have made the honors so gracefully.

Leonor. Oh, I only felt that I was in my right sphere.

Inez. And by this time, Leonor, I am almost sure that you have found the right one you can give your heart to.

Leonor. Your same question again; however I will not fret.

Inez. It will not do to break so many hearts, or to keep so many gentlemen in suspense.

Leonor. That's nothing; I but recently refused to accept the hand of Mr. Prescott, a gentleman who stands quite high in society.

Inez. And do you always give them the same answer?

Leonor. Invariably so; I tell them I will not marry in this country, hence they cannot be specially offended.

Inez. I would infer that this would cause them to be the much more dejected.

Leonor. I cannot help that; besides when gentlemen talk about love matters they do not mean it so seriously. They had just as leave make love as to converse of horses or other sports, and I listen to their effusive declarations, in which some gentlemen have acquired great tact and eloquence, but furthermore I pay no attention to it; and, after all, what is love? A dream, a self-delusion; and oftentimes I cannot refrain from smiling when I think of people who are in love.

Inez. Never mind, madamoiselle, the time will come when you will speak differently. Just let the right one come along, and if things do not go exactly your own way, your heart will begin to ache, and you will not feel much like smiling.

Leonor. It may be Inez; but all young people who indulge in love, in those unreal dreams, eventually will awake and come to their proper senses—they either good-naturedly laugh at their past follies, or bewail their existing misery, which that false god Love, whom they once so devoutly worshipped, has brought them into; and whether I make light of it now or hereafter, if I should fall in the same snare, it would change nothing.

Inez. You are the greatest wonder to me, because every action, every movement of yours is a contradiction of what you said.

Leonor. True enough, my dear; my actions do not indicate my feelings or thoughts; and this should be so, because society is such. Then I am fond of pleasure—I love music, I enjoy the dance, I am charmed with the world and its life, and if people flatter and admire me, I let them do it to their heart's content; could you blame me for that?

Inez. I mean whether you always want to live to yourself and for yourself?

Leonor. I am by no means alone, as long as I have society to live in.

Inez. What all your doings, then, for?

Leonor. You see, Inez, nature has been very kind to me; just as, in similar manner, she has endowed certain men with great powers, such as bodily strength or inventive genius and skill; and whatever graces or gifts I may possess, I make use of them in such a way as a lady of the world has a right to.

Inez. How over-modest and how over-moral you are! You ought to go lecturing; that would suit you exactly. I thought I knew you by this time, but I am far off.

Leonor. That means nothing, when, sometimes, I play a little serious with my beaux; when I frown on them occasionally, or give

them little or no attention; and when they look so dismal and down-hearted, and are almost ready to give up the ship, that I give them a glancing smile and all is made up again! Nobody wants to be angry, at least I would not.

Inez. I practiced once the same game in my younger years. I remember it well. I played mad with one of my beaux. I made him believe that he was nothing to me and that I didn't care for him, but the truth is, I was dead in love with him; and what do you think he did?

Leonor. I presume he grieved very much over it.

Inez. Not quite; he took the coin exactly at what it was given for, and went immediately courting another young lady, who was only too glad to get hold of him. So I was left in the cold, and I wept myself nearly blind, but it did me no good; therefore, I say watch out, young lady, you may fare in a like manner.

Leonor. I am sorry, *Inez*, that you had no better luck, but, as for me, I can be at ease as long as I have no intention of getting married and as long as I have a chance yet to select. While I think of it—I wanted to mention it to you several times—I have on several occasions met an elderly gentleman; he is always very pleasant to me; he seems to have traveled a great deal, and I must say I like his ways; he is a widower, and not long ago he made me faithfully promise to visit him and his daughter, a young lady just from school; he says they live in the country, only a short distance from the city; and what do you think I intend to do.

Inez. It is impossible for me to guess any of your doings.

Leonor. I have a notion to keep my word.

Inez. What do you want a widower for?

Leonor. Must every one of my movements be connected with marrying?

Inez. What else does it mean? You have no patience to live in the country.

Leonor. I have never tried it; and I may as well make the experiment, just for pass-time.

Inez. You will not hold out very long there; I know you better.

Enter, SERVANT.

Ser. Mr. Pascal desires to see madame.

Leonor. He may enter. [*Exit, Servant.*] I received a note from Mr. Pascal; he wants to see me on very important business; therefore, if you please, *Inez*, leave us alone for awhile.

Inez. Certainly, dear; and on my return, I will perhaps be able to bring you some entertaining news. [*Exit, Inez.*]

Enter PASCAL.

Leonor. I am very happy to see you.

Pascal. Thanks, madame.

Leonor. Your purpose, Mr. Pascal, is to see me on important

business affairs, and it is meet, I think, that we give them our first attention and discuss other topics afterwards.

Pascal. To satisfy your desire, I beg to inform you that the tidings which I must unfold to you (and they have come by the latest mail) are of a highly important character.

Leonor. I am prepared to listen; whatever the portents may be.

Pascal. Then I make my statement brief; and could my wishes prevail, I would have its brevity reduced to a blank.

Leonor. I understand you, but must beg you to proceed.

Pascal. I received the sad news, direct from the capital of your country, that the bank where you had moneys and securities on deposit, had failed.]

Leonor. I fear this is not your story's end.

Pascal. Almost immediately after this event, the insurgents captured the capital and overthrew the government; then a conflagration broke out which destroyed the principal part of the city, including the buildings you owned, which the former government had used for military purposes, and which yielded such a handsome income; so all your wealth and revenues, so far as I know, and if the report be true, are things of the past.

Leonor. Great heavens! What is to be done, when I am deprived of all my means? You have something else to say, sir, speak on!

Pascal. Of course, this suspends further business transactions between us, excepting that you are my debtor of a large sum of money, which I have advanced you on your securities, and which are now worthless.

Leonor. This news comes so unexpectedly that I prefer to speak over these matters with you at some future time; however, I will say so much at present, that you shall not lose one penny. I will make it a life-duty to pay you and to pay you with interest. I owe you thanks, Mr. Pascal, for the many acts of kindness you have extended to me, and I beg to assure you that you will not find me ungrateful.

Pascal. You have my heartfelt sympathies.

[*Exit.*]

Leonor. To hear of such dreadful calamities, in the midst of happy dreams, is like a tempest coming from a clear sky. It is the sudden turn of light into darkness, life into death, all into nothing. When the blind are born so, they know not their unhappiness, for man cannot lose what he does not possess. And how will I be able to bear this ruinous contrast? Reared, as I was, in comfort and luxury, the mere thought to live in poverty and privation stifles my courage and crushes me down. Oh, most cruel fate, with a relentless hand, thou inflictest heavy chastisement on me which I am unable to bear! Cast on this foreign land, and living amongst a strange people, my mind turns back to my native land! But what, O! what, will I see there? A mourning people, broken

hearts, and the ruins of once peaceful and happy homes! What shall I do; what begin, helpless as I am, in this wide, wide world!
(weeps.)

Enter INEZ, (hastily).

Leonor. You here, Inez?

Inez. I will tell you—

Leonor. What has happened? You are pale like a ghost! No doubt a great calamity has occurred; they never come single; speak, speak, Inez, and let me know it.

Inez. One moment only—

Leonor. I can listen to all; I have courage to face all. Speak, Inez, there is nobody near; nobody can hear us. I am dying with impatience; speak and let me know it, should it be my very death.

Inez. One moment only; I am out of breath.

Leonor. Hearing your voice gives me some relief. I pray you, Inez, be self-possessed and tell me what calamity has occurred.

Inez. I saw them brought on litters.

Leonor. Who and where?

Inez. Your friends.

Leonor. My friends?

Inez. Yes, your friends or our friends, Mr. Prescott and Mr. Carroll.

Leonor. I do not understand you.

Inez. They were brought on litters; I saw their faces; they looked like corpses, and for aught I know may be dead by this time.

Leonor. Dead!

Inez. It was on the street, not far from here; they placed the litters on the ground, I suppose to let the dying men rest; a large crowd gathered and formed a circle around them; all of them bearing on their faces the imprint of horror and pity, and giving away to wailing and lamentation.

Leonor. Speak on and do not stop.

Inez. I asked a gentleman friend, who stood near-by, what the cause of the scene of horror was; he answered me not, but made a very distressing face and shrugged his shoulders. I, however, persisted to let me know it, and he, in confidence, told me that the rumor was spreading over the city that the two men had fought a duel.

Leonor. A duel?

Inez. On your account, Leonor, and that you had been the instigator.

Leonor. For mercy's sake, what must I hear! I know of nothing; I am innocent! I am innocent! I wish I were dead and buried.

Inez. I pray you, compose yourself; keep quiet, you have many friends, everything will turn out for the best.

Leonor. Heaven knows I have given no cause to those men.

(weeps.)

Inez. Shame on those men; shame on all of them! They are the cause of all evil. It is rivalry of love which is at the bottom of the affair; it is jealousy that blinds them and causes them to act and behave like madmen. In their crazed frenzy they imagine their rival to succeed; they see him triumph; they see him in his glory; and are brought to the verge of despair when they behold their own defeat. But no, this cannot be, this must not be; the rival must be hunted down; they thirst for his blood worse than tigers and leopards do for their prey; nothing can satisfy them; the rival must fall, he must perish! Trifles, which children would laugh at, must be avenged like the fate of mankind were depending on them. A harmless look, a meaningless movement from the woman they love, suffices to set their wits at an end; and with their brains thus overheated with passion, are apt to commit the most cold-blooded deeds.

Leonor. Is there no place in the world I can fly to, and be relieved from all pain and agony? Have all elements conspired against me to crush me so unmercifully? Oh, *Inez*, you are all the world to me! You are my friend, my only friend and my consolation! I am helpless, I am powerless, what am I to do?

Inez. You frighten me, *Leonor*. I know that you are innocent; I conjure you, by all that is dear to you and to me, take courage and be yourself. If you give way to despair, I will be more helpless than you are.

Leonor. I have not told you yet that Mr. Pascal was here.

Inez. I saw him going out.

Leonor. Then you know nothing.

Inez. Bad news from home, I suppose.

Leonor. He informed me that the bank, where I had my moneys on deposit, had failed.

Inez. That large sum totally gone?

Leonor. He further said that the insurgents had captured the capital; that a fire broke out which destroyed a large portion of the buildings, including all those I possessed; so I am now poor and without any and every means of support.

Inez. I have no words to express my sorrow.

Leonor. In spite of all these misfortunes we will not leave each other.

Inez. What great calamities in such short space of time!

Leonor. I have never known the pangs of calamities till now.

Inez. It is all on account of the unfortunate war that rages in our country. So many people have been reduced to poverty! So many households have been enshrouded in mourning, and the torches of war are still ablaze.

Leonor. And every day brings forth new calamities.

Inez. Heaven knows when it will end.

Leonor. And what can we do now?

Inez. Our first duty is, to think of ourselves.

Leonor. I have nothing to think of any more.

Inez. We owe a duty to the world.

Leonor. What are outward forms to me when my heart is crushed?

Inez. Then do it for your sake, for my sake.

Leonor. Do what; forget it; forget what? Oh, how can I?

Inez. Would it not be best that you leave the city, and stay away until the excitement and gossip over the duel have subsided?

Leonor. I know of no place where to go.

Inez. Let me suggest that you make use of the hospitality which that gentleman has offered you; you said he lives not far from the city; what is his name?

Leonor. Mr. Loudon.

Inez. And remain there until the excitement has cooled down. I will stay here and keep you well posted of everything that transpires in the city.

Leonor. Then if I go, I suggest that you confer with no one, while you remain here.

Inez. Leave that to me. The question is, whether you want to make the trip into the country or not.

Leonor. I am determined to go.

Inez. Then we will make all necessary preparations at once; and after all your effects have been arranged, take a vehicle with swift horses, veil your face that none will recognize you, and let one of our servants accompany you; and on your arrival there, tell your host that your visit is a recreation, a pass-time, or that your staying there is by mere chance, and nobody will be any wiser.

Leonor. I approve your plan.

Inez. Then let us proceed with the work immediately, and get all necessities in readiness, and, while thus occupied, we can discuss all minor topics more fully.

Leonor. I am satisfied; I will follow you.

[*Eveunt.*

SCENE II.—*In the Country; a Grove near the Plantation of
Mr. Loudon.*

CHARLES and CLARA.

Chas. It was your frowning and your wayward way that caused me to be so despondent; however, I should have reminded you in time that you are my mirror, that the expression of your face moulds my disposition, and all our troubles could have been avoided.

Clara. I might have said the same of you, but I am happy that the misunderstanding clears itself up, and it turns out that we both, very foolishly, played mad with each other. It is probable, however, that I am a little more to be blamed than you, and, in that case, I count on your forgiving spirit.

Chas. How can you explain that?

Clara. Are you not aware that there are hundreds of eyes that see, and so many tongues that speak?

Chas. I admire your prudence, but I think I can give another explanation, which also defines our past conduct.

Clara. Let me hear it.

Chas. When we endeavor, or when we are anxious, to correct the faults of our friends, or of those for whom we most care, we are easily led to step into their grooves, for the purpose, either to hide our own feelings or to bring such faults to their attention, or we imagine such faults to be virtues, adopt them as our own, and in this manner we become neglectful of each other, without knowing it ourselves.

Clara. Your explanation holds very good; I think, however, I know of another which fits as well.

Chas. I should like very much to know it.

Clara. "Love is blind;" it is an old saying, but always new.

Chas. Very correct indeed; and I still know of another.

Clara. Do not keep it for yourself.

Chas. "Lovers will quarrel;" and do you think we have had enough of that?

Clara. This saying does not suit me at all, and I protest against it; because we might be apt to say, the more quarreling the more love. And, supposing, we should have another misunderstanding, or a falling out, when would it end? Or may I infer, that, in order to love, you always want to be on the war-path?

Chas. By heavens, no! I am the last one to call on that evil spirit.

Clara. Supposing, I mend the meaning of the phrase and make it "the less quarreling and the more love;" would there not be more symphony to it?

Chas. I must agree with you.

Clara. Again, Charles, if our love be one, should then, all of a sudden, one-half become refractory and run away like a bad schoolboy?

Chas. Then I say the ill-behaving part must be punished.

Clara. I take you by your word. Therefore, hereafter, when you frown, I will smile; when you are melancholy, I will be indifferent; when you become angry, I will laugh; when you are despondent, I will use you for my merriment and give you plenty of time to become good again.

Chas. Supposing, you should frown; or become melancholy, or indifferent, or angry, or despondent, what am I to do?

Clara. No quarters given to anybody.

Chas. Here, then, is my hand to seal our friendship as of old.

Clara. And here is mine to make the old treaty new.

Chas. Then everything is understood,

Clara. I now must leave you, Charles. I have to attend to the reception of our guests, who are soon expected to arrive. I have taken a walk to this place and I am glad of having done so.

Chas. And I rejoice of its good results.

Clara. Of course, you will be present at our entertainment.

Chas. If I should attend, I prefer to do so at a later hour.

Clara. Adieu, Charles, and do not fail to come.

Chas. Adieu, dearest, much pleasure to you.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III—*A Lawn on the Plantation of Loudon.*

Enter Loudon and Leonor; afterwards Clara and Edmonds and other couples; while in the background other ladies and gentlemen may be seen promenading.

Loudon. This, your visit to us, gives you a greater scope to become more familiar with our people, generally.

Leonor. I think I know the people of this country very well by this time; and, to a great extent, have adopted many of their customs and ways.

Loudon. But the beauties of our rural life, I presume, you have not fully realized yet.

Leonor. I must confess, the mere thought of it has always created an aversion in me; however, for reasons, which I cannot explain, it begins to be more attractive to me.

Loudon. On this mount we can oversee the whole valley. As far as the eye can reach, the soil is under fertile cultivation. It is peopled with wealthy neighbors, who are very kind and intelligent, and with whom we live in mutual friendship.

Leonor. Very pleasant surroundings, indeed.

Loudon. Yonder stretches out the lake, with its mirror-like surface.

Leonor. A grand view.

Loudon. Whereon, in summer nights, we row, in skiffs and canoes, over its length and breadth, and listen to the sweet strains of music, which our younger friends regale us with; while on those ridges, stretching out before us, one may behold, in picturesque troupes, the negroes; some sitting around fires; others dancing their favorite jig; while their merry song, with the ringing sound of the banjo, strike our ear; thus, the whole affording us an incomparably weird and fascinating view.

Leonor. Such romantic scenes the artists bring to canvas; but their task must fall short to the one who beholds these pictures in reality.

Loudon. Neither can the pen do justice to the silent solitude which pervades nature; nor can words express the secret whispering that fills our soul, when we contemplate this magic grandeur, whose meaning is eternity, and which can be understood by everybody who devotes a little time and reflection to it.

Leonor. I have lived my life in cities and found attraction in the wit of society and in the doings of the world; outside of that I thought all was dead and lifeless; but I am candid and confess my error.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter RICHARDS and LADY.

Lady. You accuse us ladies of being cruel; this cannot be, because we are the passive part.

Leonor. But in this passiveness, young ladies evince their greatest activity; and, I may say, are the most successful.

Lady. This needs explanation.

Rich. I mean by their charms that they conquer; and, in many instances, by setting, what you might call traps, for the gentlemen.

Lady. "Setting traps for the gentlemen?" The idea! when we have to sharpen all our wits to meet their flattery.

Rich. I beg pardon; I, myself, would like to be caught in such a trap.

Lady. In this case, the trap is open.

Rich. Of what nature is it?

Lady. That is for you to test.

Rich. Supposing, then, I would ask you to become my love; what would you say?

Lady. Yes.

Rich. What does it mean?

Lady. It means "yes—"

Rich. I would wager everything in the world it means "no."

Lady. No.

Rich. Now, what do you mean?

Lady. Nothing at all.

Rich. That was a trap indeed.

Lady. You have set it yourself.

Rich. Are you in earnest?

Lady. I never intend to get married.

Rich. You are a monster.

Lady. I'll tell my ma.

Rich. What do I care?

[*Exeunt.*]

Re-enter LOUDON and LEONOR.

Loudon. Before us is our fountain-spring, whose crystal waters never cease their flowing, day or night, winter or summer. It is hewn, as it were, in rocks, and no human art could have equalled it, in form and design. This eternal spring gives us much nourishment for the mind, and its moral is so well adapted to our own existence: Its source is a mystery, confounding reason itself; it comes out of the bosom of the earth; it sustains the animal and vegetable world, and is eventually swallowed up by its own kind. Well might we draw a parallel between it and our own life, by asking: Is it lost or not lost; is it death or is it life?

Leonor. I am undecided, sir, which to admire most, your own perceptive mind, or the great objects you draw my attention to.

Loudon. Then man's labor in the fields, or in the wild forests, gives us much to reflect upon, as the piercing sounds of the axe and the hushed noise of the spade and hoe, are the greatest eloquence

of a thriving civilization. Then we have the soil, the climate, the temperature, the manifold species of animals, cereals and plants, and so many other numerous objects, which keep our minds in constant employ; thus nature, herself, leading us on as the great Preceptor.

Leonor. You are unfolding to me the wonders of a new world.

Loudon. Now, if acceptable, madame, we will walk on, to meet the other guests, who have now almost all arrived, I presume; and you may amuse yourself in a different manner, which, perhaps, will be more pleasing to you.

Leonor. Many thanks.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter CLARA and EDMONDS.

Edmonds. No change in your mind? and still so fully and firmly determined? No, it cannot be so, knowing each other as we do, from earliest childhood.

Clara. I must be sincere to you as well as to myself.

Edmonds. Do you want tests of my faith? Do you want sacrifices of me? Do you want my life? Speak, wish, command and convince yourself that I would do all to make you happy.

Clara. Please remember, my friend, that love is not a duty which one owes to another, and that in my choice, I ought to be left as free as you are in yours.

Edmonds. You are making my heart bleed.

Clara. You act very strange; because I have expressed myself several times.

Edmonds. Is there one spark of hope left for me?

Clara. You are very cruel to me, because it hurts me to offend you.

Edmonds. Speech, then, made me wretched; but silence will be my death."

Clara. Not that; I love to speak with you on any other subject.

Edmonds. I thank you.

Clara. Shall we join the other party?

Edmonds. I leave it to your choice.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter GENT and LADY.

Lady. Dancing is a great source for conversation; the preparations first and the incidents afterwards.

Gent. You are right, very right, indeed.

Lady. So it has been in times past, and so it will be in the future; and my mother, who is rather an aged lady, can never forget the amusements she had while she was young.

Gent. I never knew that ladies remember these things so long.

Lady. She talks very frequently about them; what styles of dances they danced, whom she danced with, and all other details; and she mentions all that so often, that I am just as familiar with it as she is.

Gent. And don't you think that we gentlemen enjoy ourselves, too?

Lady. Maybe it is equally divided.

Gent. And to whom do you think we owe all this?

Lady. To society in general.

Gent. Not at all; not at all, if you please! We owe everything to the young ladies. If it were not for them, we would never have a dance; never, never! This is as plain as daylight; sweet creatures the ladies all are.

Lady. And I believe that the young gentlemen deserve all thanks, because it is they that originate all our amusements; they are the ones!

Gent. This is a mistake; suppose all young ladies in this neighborhood would run away, (which heaven forbid), would we ever have a dance? and suppose all would come back again, we would have a dance immediately; don't you see where the origin and cause is?

Lady. I believe you are right.

Gent. Dancing serves also for courtship.

Lady. Ain't you ashamed of yourself?

Gent. I blush all over.

Lady. It is for amusement only.

Gent. For nothing else!

Lady. And for pass-time.

Gent. And!

Lady. Not for courting.

Gent. You don't say so!

Lady. I'll not speak to you any more.

Gent. Then we will dance for amusement only.

[Exit.]

SCENE IV.--*A Room in the House of Loudon.*

Enter LOUDON and LEONOR; afterwards CLARA.

Loudon. You had scarcely time to make our acquaintance, and your leaving us so suddenly causes us much regret.

Leonor. I am sorry that I am compelled to break off my visit, as matters of great importance demand my presence in the city; and just to please all, I tarried here longer than I intended.

Loudon. We must find ourselves in the inevitable.

Leonor. I owe you, sir, and all friends many thanks, as all have been so polite and attentive to me; and, not wishing to disturb the happy assemblage, through my leaving, I beg you, sir, to give them my compliments, one and all.

Loudon. It shall be done; and one thing, be so kind to bear in mind, that you will find our house and home ever ready to receive you, and that you may partake of our hospitality in its widest sense.

Leonor. Many thanks! And as to your indisposition, which came on you so suddenly, I trust that it will be of no duration, and that we will soon have the pleasure of seeing you in our city, in the best of health and spirits. Now adieu! [Exit.

Loudon. My best wishes with you! Scarcely have I made her acquaintance and my heart is like cleft in twain. She is gone, gone; but her memory lives with me. I would give worlds to possess her and call her my own; but it cannot be, as a hundred barriers are between us. What, can I not choose? What mortal dares to tell me, this you might do, that you must relinquish; this is your sphere, and that your limit. Am I a slave to anybody, if I am not already the slave to my own wavering and indecision? or am I to be chained forever to a particular mode of life? Do I not breathe the free air, and can I not move as I desire? This is plain reasoning, but I must be cautious and act with foresight and discretion. I must reflect, of myself, of my advanced years, of my standing and manhood; all these forbid me to act in haste. Then comes her own predilection; she is wooed and loved by men, who, as to her, are my superiors. Ah, this pierces like daggers; it is here that I am weak and powerless, and is it here where my defeat lies. Impossible! I cannot reach the end. I will cut loose, as I must save myself. Away, then, from my eyes and mind, with that spectre that disturbs my peace! Away with that beautiful serpent that gnaws in my bosom and drinks the life-blood out of me! Begone apparition and tormentor! Ah, you cannot disturb me in my quiet! I do not love you; I hate you; I detest you; nay, I curse you! What, what, have I said? uttered a curse? Have I lost my reason, and has it come so far? No, it is not so; she has done me no harm; she is kind and good; she is as innocent as a child. No, no, I bless her; I bless the ground she treads upon. It is her eye, her brow, her lips, her speech, and even her shadow, which enchant me, so that I could fall upon my knees and worship her as my goddess! (*Distant voices commingled with laughter and disconnected musical sounds are heard.*) Youth rejoices; it partakes of the pleasures and claims the world; but myself, I am doomed to linger away my days in privation and solitude. Soon old age will creep on me, to thrust its iron grasp over my frame, making me weak and palsied, carving deep furrows in my face, dimming my eye-sight and causing me to move on with tottering and trembling step. Then, at last, at the touch of death, to the goal of mortals, the grave--I shudder! Is this my destiny? No, it cannot be! I am not lost to myself; I am not dead to the world; I breathe, I live; I am active, I am strong! Were, therefore, mountains between, that stretch their peaks into the invisible heights of the heavens; were rivers, with cataracts and whirlpools to cross; were chasms before me, whose depth, to look down upon, would make my blood chill with horror; were deserts to pass; bad prison-chains to be broken asunder; what is all that to me? My heart longs to win and possess her as my own! What is that? I hear

footsteps; somebody is coming. Vanish feelings and thoughts; I must be myself again.

Enter CLARA.

Clara. Are you unwell, papa? Miss Leonor informed me that you were indisposed, and advised me to attend to your wants and see to your comfort.

Loudon. Be at ease; it is of no consequence.

Clara. Are you suffering pain, father; do tell me?

Loudon. It is one of those disturbances, caused by the blood, when not circulating properly. In such instances it is best to let nature take its own course.

Clara. Your eyes look restless, and the expression of your face indicates excitement or perhaps pain.

Loudon. Do not trouble yourself; a little rest will do all to restore the various members of the body to activity again.

Clara. I feel that I ought to press the words from your lips that you suffer. I pray you, father, spare me the pangs of asking further questions; but speak, command, what I shall do for you, as no task is too difficult and no labor too much for me.

Loudon. I can say no more than I have said.

Clara. I know that, with intent, you withhold from me the truth of your suffering; and the mere thought of my inactivity makes me a fit subject for the sick-bed. No, you cannot do this, you cannot act towards me in this manner; for these secret and sudden attacks are to be more dreaded than the slow course of a sickness; and, if I am anything to you, I pray you, let me give you some relief. You are unwell, your look is unsteady, there is fever on you, and I believe your voice betrays it. Nay, I must stay here; I must watch every movement of yours. No, no, I will not move from your side! Therefore, speak; speak freely, so that I may be able to alleviate your suffering.

Loudon. My own dear child, may heaven bless you! May you always be happy. You are my all I possess in this world. You are the image of your mother, whom once I so tenderly loved and whose memory I still so fervently cherish. She departed her life when you were quite young in years, when you could not realize yet what passed on around you. I well remember a certain incident; it was immediately before she breathed her last; she had beckoned us to come to her bedside; I understood her and lifted you on her bed. She then pressed a kiss on your lips, uttered a benediction for you and begged me to take care of and protect you; she, thereupon, fell back on her pillow and gave up her spirit. I, then and there, vowed to care for you and to protect you, just as she wished it; and heaven knows I have done so up to this day. What these tears for, Clara? Do not weep, it makes me unhappy.

Clara. What language are you using, father? I have never heard you speak thus before. Your address is so earnest and full of

meaning, that it leaves no doubt of your grief and suffering. Should it signify danger, oh, heaven! help and protect me!

Loudon. It is your devotion and sympathy for me, my child, which causes me to speak so earnestly to you. I beg you again, leave me! Go and attend to your guests. I assure you it is nothing; nothing, whatsoever, ails me. And, if you do care for me, obey my wishes.

Clara. I will no longer be contrary to you; and if you believe that rest will restore you, it is my bounden duty to contribute my part, in leaving you; trusting and hoping, as I do, for the speedy restoration of your health. [Exit.]

Loudon. Existence of care and toil; error is thy beginning, error thy end! The short span of time of our life, is like a river, where our frail body with a spirit is placed upon, whereon we descend in its continuous windings, drifting along its rapid current, seemingly beyond our will and control; or, like a tree, whose trunk begets branches, and these again beget numberless branches, and these follow out the same course in the myriads of leaves; so, too, the human mind may follow out this labyrinth of the wandering and drifting of man, but in this effort, it, at best, is caught in its own meshes. Creation is endless, and man, in his frailty, seeks to fill out the blank by the desires of the flesh. But, after all, what use is it to accuse nature, or ourselves, because we do not reach perfection sublime? The world, withal, remains the world; virtue is virtue; passion remains passion; the fields and meadows are green; flowers give forth their fragrance and wither and die; storms are violent and destructive; it suffices that the world is a whole, and that in its design it is whole and complete. I am possessed of a spirit; I have ideas, passions, a will, a mind; why question each one of my faculties, then, I am lost to myself. Away, then, with speculative reasoning; I shall make use of my powers and follow out my rightful inclinations and purposes! [Exit.]

[END ACT I.]

ACT II.

SCENE 1.—*A Room in the House of Thomas, Situated in the Neighborhood of the Plantation of Loudon.*

Thomas and Wife; afterwards Tom.

Thomas. The conduct of Charles puzzles me very much.

Mrs. Thomas. He is tired out; have a little patience with him.

Thomas. There is something wrong going on with him; he is pondering and thinking all the time about something; and it seems to me to be over a very serious matter. I noticed that, at various

times, he sighed deeply; and, at other times, I saw and heard him talking to himself; then he is down-hearted and looks scarcely anybody in the face; I never knew him to be so.

Mrs. Thomas. He has been studying very hard, and he now feels the effects of it.

Thomas. I have, so far, in no manner disturbed him in any of his doings; I have always let him have his own way; but, just think, a young man, in the prime of his years, enjoying good health, ought he not to be full of life and energy? Instead of this, he is morose, he is absent-minded, and avoids the company of everybody, we, ourselves, included.

Mrs. Thomas. It hurts me to hear you speak of him in this manner; because Charles always was a well-behaved and industrious boy; he received the highest honors at school, and everybody likes him and speaks well of him.

Thomas. What has that to do with his present doings?

Mrs. Thomas. Perhaps nothing; but you are fault-finding with everybody and everything.

Thomas. Shall I be silent?

Mrs. Thomas. I don't care what you do.

Thomas. Let him go on then; I am satisfied.

Mrs. Thomas. What do you want him to do?

Thomas. I want him to be practical; I want him to live in the world and with the world; I want him to be a man; for that I gave him the benefit of my practical knowledge and experience. Or, is he a book-worm? Then I wish he had become a blacksmith, like myself, and be of some use to the world.

Mrs. Thomas. I can't see what you argue about; he doesn't study at all, and because he don't study you are dissatisfied; and were he to study, it would be wrong, too, because you don't want him to be a book-worm; what do you want of him?

Thomas. Studying or not studying, I don't mind it; but I hate to see him going about like a shadow. Or, is he a dreamer? how, then, is he to make a living?

Mrs. Thomas. A person never feels one day like another.

Thomas. This is not a question of a day or two; but it has been going on for a long time, and too long for me to stand it.

Mrs. Thomas. You are too exacting. Young people are brought up differently now-a-days than they were in our times. You and I were raised in the mountains. When a stranger came in the valley, it went from mouth to mouth, and almost the whole county would know it the same day; when a person got a letter through the post-office, that was a great event. I remember when my grandfather went once to the city; he brought me a pair of fancy-stitched shoes; and I looked at them day and night, and used them up by handling and looking at them, and did not wear them at all. Young folks are different now, and things have changed since our days.

Thomas. I never bother with nonsense. I had to work in my

sweat and earned my moneys with the forge-hammer. I was beating the red-hot iron, that the sparks flew about me and scorched my face; I did it for years—summer and winter, early and late; and for whom have I done it? Many a night my bones ached me from fatigue and exhaustion, so that I was deprived of my sleep. I have done it, and have done it cheerfully, expecting, as I did, that our son would be a comfort to our old age.

Mrs. Thomas. You have no cause to speak of him in this manner. The boy has done nothing bad; he has not stolen, he has not robbed, he does not dissipate, he don't go in bad company, he wrongs nobody; what shall he do? Do you want to drive him out of the house? Do it and you will kill me, too.

Thomas. I wish our boy no harm. I have worked for him, it is true; and I have loved to work for him, is also true, because he deserved it; I only want the best for him, and that for his own good; everything else is secondary and ought to satisfy you or anybody else.

Mrs. Thomas. I have prayed day and night for the hour to come that he could be with us again; and, now, as he is here, I have no rest.

Thomas. For heaven's sake, what is the use of carrying on in this manner, because I talked a little severe? Where is the damage I have done; where is the injury? Can I not talk in my own house? Must I weigh every word I speak? I am the last one to wish our boy harm; he can remain under our roof as long as he wants to; he may sit at our table, eat of our bread, as long as he chooses, and never would I ask him a question.

Mrs. Thomas. I know you too well; to-morrow you will have something else to preach about.

Thomas. It is awful to commence anything with women. When their tongues are of no more avail, they come with tears, then with threats, and so they become worse and worse; and what can one do? They know how to manage a man!

Mrs. Thomas. After one has done everything for peace and harmony, all is wrong, anyhow; and no matter what I say or do, it is wrong, and whatever you say or do, it is right and nice.

Thomas. You are right in everything. I am wrong and you are right, and you are right and I am wrong. I will never open my mouth again. You and your son, together, may do what you please.

(Knocks are heard from within.)

Mrs. Thomas. Who can that be?

Tom. (Within.) Is she heah?

Thomas. What do you want?

Mrs. Thomas. It is that old nigger-fool, Tom.

Thomas. You have nothing in the shop; have you?

Enter Tom.

Tom. I'm lookin' for my mare, 'boss; she got crazy las' night,

an' run off; de truff am, de whole house am runnin' crazy; an' de white folks, de niggers, de horses, an' de mules; dey all got it from de frolic yesterday; all is spell-mell, as young mistress says.

Thomas. Are you looking for the mare, I shod about a week ago?

Tom. Yes, massa; don't know what got in her head; it must hab been de music an' de dancin' dat made her dance away.

Thomas. You don't give her anything to eat; that is the reason she runs off; and in a blacksmith shop she is not likely to find anything; you must look for her somewhere else.

Tom. No, boss, she's gettin' a plenty; I tend to her like a chile; every time I does. When I got her, she was all bone, an' now she's fat like a hog. I knows 'twas nuffin' else den de fuss we had over dar, dat drove her 'way, 'cause everybody got dat a-way; an' de Lor' bless me, I don't blame her, 'cause I was kinder tipsy-topsy myself.

Thomas. You needn't fear, she'll soon come back to you.

Mrs. Thomas. You must have had a gay old time at your place.

Tom. If you hab'n't see dat, mam, you see nuffin', nuffin' at all. Yer should hab see de cookin', de bakin', de movin', de scrubbin', and de eatin', an' de drinkin', an' dancin'; I never see such frolic in all de days ob my life.

Mrs. Thomas. Miss Clara has got to be a very fine young lady.

Tom. Mighty right, mam; no finer lady in de country.

Mrs. Thomas. This is the first entertainment gotten up by her since she returned, I believe.

Tom. I guess so; an' 'cause of de young gem'en, an' 'cause of dere courtin' of her. I sees what's gwine on; I knows what's de matter, an' I knows dat massa an' young mistress are gwine to keep up de fun.

Mrs. Thomas. Rich people can afford it.

Tom. Yer knows, mam, when cotton's gwine come up, den comes de flowers, den a nudder, den a nudder, an' so it keeps gwine on; den comes de bolls, an' dey all's gwine to come, an' de whole cotton-field's full, an' de crop's made.

Mrs. Thomas. The young lady is to be married soon; is that what you mean?

Tom. Yer don't know what I knows; an' what I knows is a heap; 'cause I saw it, an' 'cause I knows it.

Mrs. Thomas. There is more in you than you let on.

Tom. Dere's just whar yer's got it. I's no fool; an' den it stays in de family; don't yer tells it. I see'd it, yer bet; just like I did wid Jane, when we played sweethearts; de Lor' bless me, 'dose good ole times I never sees agin.

Mrs. Thomas. Who was it, Tom; whom have you seen?

Tom. 'Twasn't anybody, an' 'cause 'twasn't anybody 'twas nobody.

Mrs. Thomas. I ought not to have questioned you, Tom, but you brought me the story yourself.

Tom. No story 't'all; ole Tom tells no story; an' 'cause yer say I tells stories, I tells yer what 'tis; an' 'cause it remains in de family, an' 'cause 'tis no harm to tell yer folks, an' 'cause yer are good sorter people. It was Mr. Charles an' young mistress. I oughtn't tell, but 'tis too nice to keep, an' 'cause we soon hab a weddin', an' dancin', an' music, an' wine, an' lemonade, an' water agin.

Thomas. You never saw our boy and Miss Clara courting each other; you must have dreamed it.

Tom. I knows what I'm talkin'. I see'd them; 'twas just 'fore dancin', an' 'fore de musicianers come; I saw dem, 'tis dead sure; no mistake at all; I was just layin' 'hind a bush of trees, an' yer bet I kept down an' quiet; I just had a nap, an' just woke up.

Mrs. Thomas. Could you hear them speak?

Tom. 'Course I did, just as plain as day.

Thomas. Let's hear what they said; I would like to know whether you are not mistaken.

Tom. Well, boss, I hear dem speakin', but I couldn't understand nary thing; dey just talked like all fine folks talk in dose fine rooms where dey hab carpets an' gold lamps, an' such things. I thought fust dey're a talkin' French, 'cause I couldn't understand what dey was a talkin' about, an' 'cause it was so fine; but I knows 'twasn't French; an' it sound mighty fine, an' I thought dey're a talkin' candy, ladies-fingers, dough-nuts, ginger-cakes; but I knows 'twas nary thing of dat; 'twas no candy; no ladies-fingers, no dough-nuts, an' no ginger-cakes; nuffin of de kind.

Thomas. What do you think they meant?

Tom. Well, boss, dey was a playin' sweet-hearin'.

Mrs. Thomas. How do you know; you said you couldn't understand what they said?

Tom. I knows all 'bout it, 'cause I was dar myself; an' 'cause dey talked so sweet together; but I got fooled dis time, 'cause dey didn't kiss. I made eyes as big as the moon, but I got left; dat must be de new way; 'cause in my days 'twasn't so; an' when I was young, I was boss 'moung de nigger girls, 'cause I hugged an' kissed 'em, an' 'cause dey liked me for that. De Lor' bless me, dose good ole times, dey nebber come back agin. Good-bye, folks; de Lor' bless yer; I must look for my mare. [Exit.]

Thomas. Have you heard that?

Mrs. Thomas. I did.

Thomas. What we, with our wits, could not detect, this ignorant negro had sense, or was stupid enough, to find out, and give us the key to.

Mrs. Thomas. I would not bother about it.

Thomas. I canuot afford to be silent.

Mrs. Thomas. Do you think that such an affair, if true, could make him down-hearted?

Thomas. It is that, and nothing else.

Mrs. Thomas. It is probable that Charles is ambitious; that he

imagines that, with our limited means, and with our humble position, he cannot reach a certain end in life, which he is longing for.

Thomas. I know too well, that that aristocrat, over there, will never consent to such a match; because for that man, there exists only lords and over-bearing men and women. He looks down on us people like we were not fit even to black his boots; because a nigger would have to do it; he has an only daughter, and looks for her very high. Charles knows it, and is very far from the mark; and for this reason he is down-east and absent-minded.

Mrs. Thomas. I scarcely know what to say.

Thomas. This will never do; he is just from school and plays "sweet-heartin'," as that negro says; no, this will never do! He has no position or standing in the world, and he stretches out his hand for something which is altogether out of his reach.

Mrs. Thomas. You don't know, whether it is so or not; he might have been taking a walk with the young lady. I hear that all the young ladies speak well of him, and that they like him; and if he wants to associate with them, let him do so; because he can learn good manners of them.

Thomas. What do I care for your manners, or for your young ladies, or for your old ones?

Mrs. Thomas. Can you rely on what that old fool of a nigger has said?

Thomas. You are never embarrassed for some kind of an excuse for him.

Mrs. Thomas. You have no proof of anything.

Thomas. These people do not associate with us, and never will. There is wealth; there is family pride; there is extravagance and luxury; and, in their conceit, whether true or not, trace their ancestry back to French and English kings. What have you, or I, or our son, to do with these people?

Mrs. Thomas. What do you intend to do?

Thomas. Nothing less than to get all his romantic notions out of his head, and that before long.

Mrs. Thomas. I fear you will make things five times worse.

Thomas. Let me see to that. I will attend to my work matters, and, in the meantime, the gentleman will make his appearance; and I propose to have a little talk with him.

Mrs. Thomas. And I will attend to my household duties; and, by that time, I hope your temper will have sufficiently cooled down.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*A Lawn near the Plantation.*

CHARLES and CLARA.

Chas. I am very happy to find you at your favorite resort; and now tell me what news have you for me.

Clara. My father became indisposed; he thought a change of atmosphere would do him some good, and left for the city to remain there awhile.

Chas. I presume you feel very lonesome.

Clara. Not very, because I read occasionally; then, every now and then, I expect to receive a visit from a friend, or, to have a pleasant chat with you.

Chas. Do you think, dearest, that we ought to guard our secret much longer?

Clara. What prompts you to ask this question?

Chas. Because it gnaws at my heart, and it almost becomes unbearable to me; for I feel so proud of your love that I think the whole world should know it, and to play off, to deny myself, to deny you, is the greatest torture to me.

Clara. As long as we understand each other, it matters nothing. Let us guard us our secret a little longer; maybe time and other favorable turns will come to our aid.

Chas. Do you count on differences we might have to encounter?

Clara. I count on nothing; but, if a storm should come, let us meet it bravely.

Chas. To be more direct; how would your father view the relation we hold to each other, were he to know it?

Clara. He gives me the greatest liberty in everything, and restricts me in nothing; he has always been so kind to me.

Chas. I mean the consummation of our love into marriage, which, eventually, our aim is directed to. At any rate, you are familiar with his ways, or know his views.

Clara. As you ask me so directly, I must answer. I suspect he wants me to marry into one of the wealthier families that form our acquaintance; and for this reason, I fear, it will be a test for me.

Chas. I, too, entertain fears that I will meet with obstacles.

Clara. Of what nature are they?

Chas. My father prides himself of being independent.

Clara. What has this to do with the difficulties you fear?

Chas. Only so much, that if your father should object, mine would be still more obstinate.

Clara. I admire such a free and strong spirit.

Chas. Because my father cannot divest himself of the ideas which he imbibed in his younger years; he values labor, while modern ideas are seemingly against it; he imagines that he is disliked for that, and he dislikes or hates society in return.

Clara. I esteem his sentiments; for the plow is more necessary than the liveried coach, and the axe, more useful than the sword.

Chas. This is one great reason why I so much admire and love you, because you possess the courage and will, to rise above the unnatural drift of ideas of society and man.

Clara. And will your father make opposition, because he meets with opposition?

Chas. Like yourself, Clara, I know nothing positive.

Clara. It is so unfortunate that we have to act in secret.

Chas. As you first suggested, let us leave our plans with the future, and let us change our conversation; and the time that is left us, let us speak over light matters—of the news of the day, of our friends, or of any other topic, we might choose.

Clara. Well enough; I will begin, then, with our late entertainment, which you missed; of the persons who were there; and how we enjoyed ourselves.

Chas. I will give you all my attention.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*A Room in the House of Thomas.*

Thomas. Impossible! I cannot pass over the matter in silence. At all events, I must make it my duty to find out what ails him. Should his grievance be a love-affair, to be just, I have no right to meddle with it; but I cannot keep quiet when he sacrifices his health, and, perhaps, his life; it, therefore, becomes my duty to intervene.

Enter Mrs. Thomas.

Charles has not made his appearance yet.

Mrs. Thomas. This is the usual hour he returns.

Thomas. I am becoming impatient.

Mrs. Thomas. Do you believe, husband, that Charles is so far off his duty, as to induce you to make such a serious affair of it?

Thomas. It is prudent to stem the current while we have the power. If we are indifferent, serious consequences might follow.

Mrs. Thomas. It is, after all, only a trifling matter; all young people court and make love to each other.

Thomas. What do I care for courting and love-making! He goes about like a shadow, and for that reason alone do I want to approach him.

Mrs. Thomas. I cannot stop you; it is impossible.

Thomas. Exactly so.

Mrs. Thomas. Will you, by all means, raise difficulties and bring discord among us?

Thomas. I have just enough of it. I am going to manage this business; that settles it.

Mrs. Thomas. Do this, then, for me: let *him* do most of the speaking; make only allusions to his being desponding, because it might be something different from what you imagine. And please do not embarrass him; make him believe that you are trying to satisfy your curiosity, or that it is to while away your time, or something of the sort; will you do this?

Thomas. I hear him coming.

Mrs. Thomas. I must let you two remain alone; because were I to stay, it would give this meeting too serious an appearance; and

my presence will do him no good, because I know it is impossible to prevent you from doing what you are determined to do. Therefore, husband, I beg you again, moderate your temper, and be, by no means, hasty; you are having, altogether, your own way.

Thomas. Very well, you may go now. [Exit *Mrs. Thomas.*]

Thomas. It is a very delicate task for me to disturb him in his innermost thoughts; he is timid, and may not want to come out with the color. I have got it; I will get it out of him in my own way.

Enter CHARLES.

Charles, my son, come near, and let me know where you have been, and how you pass your time now-a-days.

Chas. I have been walking along the banks of the lake, father; and, my time, I must confess, I ought to employ to better advantage.

Thomas. I want to have an old-time conversation with you.

Chas. It is a long time since we had one of these; and, I must say, they always afforded me much pleasure, and were very instructive, besides.

Thomas. Now, my boy, there is no formality necessary between us; indeed, I detest all ceremony.

Chas. This is yourself.

Thomas. Then, between men of sense and reason, there ought to be excluded everything that is lengthy and pompous, because such is insincere; or it is often resorted to as an excuse; or it is used as a pretext to cover faults and shortcomings.

Chas. This, too, coincides with your character.

Thomas. An idea, a word, a look, a hint, may sometimes tell volumes, especially when made use of in proper time.

Chas. An idea, a word, a look, all these may be very effective; but I think we should resort to the use of words, with a full meaning and understanding, especially when one aims to be frank and honest.

Thomas. Correct, my son! Then, I never deal in riddles. I assume not what I am not, or what I cannot be. And I value and spare human feelings, and, by no means, would I disregard yours.

Chas. Have you anything personally to tell me?

Thomas. Men are deceitful; on weighty matters they seldom tell the truth; either out of selfishness or out of frivolity, or, perhaps, out of levity; or they take no interest, or, it may not concern them; but I am your parent; I am your best friend; and being, as we are, so closely linked together, by nature and affinity, how could I be false to you?

Chas. What do you mean, father? Have I committed a wrong, or do you give credence to idle talk of malicious persons?

Thomas. Far from that, my son. I would never think that you would be guilty of a wrong or a crime. I would sooner believe it of myself. But, here, we are together for ourselves and to our-

selves. We can speak, we can reason, on things as they are. We must never deceive ourselves; for, by doing this, we become our greatest enemies; and, by means of this self-deception, success is never attained. On the contrary, mishaps will eventually overtake us, then we accuse Providence or fate, when all evil consequences are due to our own folly. But age, with its experience, may be a guide to guard against the many pitfalls in life, by which we are everywhere surrounded; and it is, therefore, well to take heed and to listen.

Chas. I perceive, father, where you direct my attention; to live questions; what our duties and responsibilities are. Grand themes they are; they cannot be too much commented upon.

Thomas. I am very glad, my son, that you perceive certain things in their true light.

Chas. And a theme like duty, so broad in meaning and conception, never becomes old; because, as the world progresses, so does man; and our duties must keep even pace.

Thomas. Correct, my son! And all new duties are based on old ones; for they are the foundation, and the new duties form the superstructure.

Chas. I know of several duties which you have instilled into my mind, and which I well remember from my earliest childhood, namely, to make my acts correspond with my words; never to mean one thing and do another; and ever so many other precepts which I will never forget.

Thomas. Youth is, at best, heedless. It seldom investigates anything; all is but for the moment. You can compare it to an infant, holding out its little hands, ready to grasp at anything it sees; because every object stands too near its eyes, as nature has not given it yet the reason of measurement, which only comes with maturer age.

Chas. What you have said, father, are word-pictures. Practical examples would make your illustration much stronger, and it seems there is something of the kind lurking in your mind, which, I suggest you might give out at once.

Thomas. Well, my son, what is a love-affair?

Chas. This changes our subject.

Thomas. It is the continuance.

Chas. It may be answered in many ways.

Thomas. And how do you define yours with our rich neighbor's daughter?

Chas. (Surprised.) It is no crime.

Thomas. But how is it, when one is absent-minded; when he knows nobody; when he scarcely speaks; when he takes no time to eat, as is the case with you; how can you explain that?

Chas. Admitting your personal remarks; is a love-affair equal to ruin, to dangers and calamities, as you seem to make it appear?

Thomas. Beware, my son, you cannot reach what you aim at. I must warn you not to commit a folly on yourself; and it is my

duty to tell you to get such ideas out of your mind, because, for you, they are impossibilities. Can you not realize your position, and that you practice on yourself the greatest deception?

Chas. In searching for happiness, we are not apt to look for misfortune. We are human, and our nature is not so complete as to embrace both ends of our life. This would make us all-wise or demi-gods; it would leave us no scope to hope, to wish, to fear; all we are required to do is, to be honest and sincere.

Thomas. But honor and making a false step are two things. You are inexperienced; it is your credulity that leads you. Take heed of what I say. A little flirting, which young girls practice with you, do you take that for true coin? There is where it is; have I guessed right?

Chas. I cannot see what you have guessed.

Thomas. I can give you a better explanation—according to the romantic notions of young people, love dwells in a neat little house; of course it stands in the air. It is made out of the daintiest tissues; the walls are sugar-coated; the tables are full with all kinds of edibles and sweets; all one has to do is to help himself. Then in front of this darling little house is a nice garden, and beautiful trees, and flower-beds and smooth walks are there graded with sea-shells; all one has to do is to take it easy. Then in the air are yellow canary birds flying about, whistling all sorts of love-songs; isn't that nice? And are these the things you fill your mind with? Have you ambition? then work out your fortune with your own hands, and waste not your time in watching for things that are out of your reach. Be proud of yourself, and hold up your head as high as the next one, and go about like a man and not like a shadow!

Chas. (*After a silence.*) I am not prepared to answer.

Thomas. I feel for you that you should not be made the laughing stock; or the foot-ball, to be kicked or pushed at, at pleasure. Your feelings, your pride, your manhood, are at stake. Yes, love may be sweet for awhile, but to be jilted from people, who consider themselves above you, ah! this is bitter, it galls, it pains, it goes to the very back-bone; therefore, I tell you, now, if you have feelings, and want them spared, look to yourself alone.

Chas. I wish, by no means, to act against your wishes, or to be disobedient to you, father. I believe in honesty, and you have taught me to be honest. I must tell the young lady to release me from my pledges; I must tell her my father warned me of being jilted; that my honor, pride and manhood are at stake; that my father is opposed, because she is wealthy, and I am poor; that my father is a workman; I will tell her all that and perhaps more, and no doubt you will be delighted with me.

Thomas. This is not the kind of obedience I expect from you; but I should have been asked for advice and consent in this grave matter. I only spoke in the manner I did because I intended to dispel the clouds that are gathering around you, and which seem

to make you unhappy. I only had your good at heart. 'Tis true I have taught you to be honest; therefore, be true to yourself, and keep your word and promises, and act not dishonorable on my account; and, I go a step further, and give you my parental blessing. The future will tell.

[Exit.]

Chas. What folly and eccentricity! Such hatred and aversion against wealth, because it is wealth; and on the other side, contempt against labor, because of it being labor. I, myself, could sacrifice my own feelings, because my motives might be construed as being selfish; but it is a crime to discard Clara as she is true and faithful. Perhaps the wrong is on my side for having let it come thus far; but it is done. I must stand with her through all ordeals, and only death can bring me off from my purpose and duty.

[Exit.]

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SCENE IV.—*In the City; a Room in Leonor's Mansion.*

LEONOR, INEZ, and afterwards LOUDON.

Inez. The sleep you have enjoyed has done you much good; because the expression of your face is much better than when you arrived.

Leonor. But I am much weaker than I appear, as I am thoroughly exhausted.

Inez. You will soon feel stronger.

Leonor. It is in grief, then, that I will grow strong.

Inez. I sent you the message to return to the city, because I feared your absence might be construed to your disadvantage.

Leonor. I approve your course; nevertheless, the change itself, and the few hours I remained in the country, have done me some good.

Inez. First of all, try to be composed.

Leonor. Tell me, were many people here during my absence, and did they inquire for me?

Inez. Quite a number came. I informed them of your absence from the city, and they immediately left.

Leonor. And the dueling cavaliers, how are they doing?

Inez. I understand that both are in a critical condition, and that their physicians are in doubt of their recovery.

Leonor. I cannot realize the magnitude of all this misfortune; and in such short space of time!

Inez. You will soon have the sympathy of the public; all will be well in time.

Leonor. What is the public to me? I want to return home. I live amongst strangers. What do I care for them? What do they care for me? A little pleasure they have afforded me, that is all. Accursed be the hour when I left our native shore! Oh, had I only remained! Give me advice what to do! No, no, I want no advice;

I want to travel home rather to-day than to-morrow; but that cannot be, either, for I have no means; I am now poor, and have no friends to depend upon.

Inez. Be reasonable, Leonor; just wait until the gloomy clouds have passed away, the outlook will be much brighter. And, then, what do you desire to go to South America for? You will only add yourself to the distressed. We may grieve over our misfortune and bewail our country's calamities as well here as there.

Leonor. It is the absence from home which makes my present condition so much more distressing. I think of our country incessantly; every nook, every corner there is sacred to me; and the more I am crushed, the more my heart bleeds, the more my love abounds for it. Yes, Inez, we may mourn here, we have good cause for it.

Enter SERVANT.

Ser. Mr. Loudon has returned, and desires to wait on madame.

Leonor. I am ready to receive him. *[Exit Servant.*

Inez. Now, Leonor, you must not be downcast; you must be bright and cheerful. Your toilet is faultless; your hair looks well, and you look most charmingly at present; I will see you soon again. *[Exit.*

Leonor. The world is a farce. People are false and deceitful; and each is true, and lives up to his part and role. I, too, must accommodate myself to the hypocritical customs of society, wear a mask, and act my part as necessity demands; here he comes.

Enter LOUDON.

I regret I kept you waiting, Mr. Loudon; I felt a little indisposed, but am quite well now, and am delighted to welcome you at my home.

Loudon. Thanks, madame; and I am happy to see you so well.

Leonor. You are the first visitor I have received since my return to the city.

Loudon. This is good fortune, and a great compliment, besides.

Leonor. And I consider your visit in the same light.

Loudon. This is your general disposition, for I have never seen you otherwise than well pleased.

Leonor. Conversation with friends has such a good influence over me; and at this time, especially, I value their company more than ever. Please tell me how all friends, in your delightful neighborhood, are? I enjoyed myself so well in their midst; they were all so kind to me, especially Miss Clara; how is she, and how are they all?

Loudon. You left a lasting good impression amongst us, so that we all hope that, at an early day, you will renew your visit, make your stay a long one and our friendship lasting.

Leonor. This is exceedingly kind. Your words give me so much

encouragement, and, for this reason, I want to change our conversation.

Loudon. I yield to anything that is agreeable to you.

Leonor. I will inform you, then, that, at the present time, I find myself in great embarrassments and need advice; and I beg to ask you, whether I can count on your kindness to assist me with your good offices. You possess great knowledge and experience of the world, while we ladies, on embarrassing occasions, are helpless like children.

Loudon. Most readily will I serve you.

Leonor. I am threatened, on all sides, with evil. Perhaps you have heard of my misfortune, which came so unexpectedly; and in my distress I paid you that visit, expecting, as I did, to find relief; but my lady friend sent me a message to return to the city immediately; she thought that it would be the best course; and here I am in fear, in anguish, and almost in despair. I presume all came to your ears, and, if so, it will spare me the pain to unfold to you a story of woe and misery.

Loudon. When you were with us, it was apparent that you were troubled, and your sudden departure made us think that there must be something strange about it. On that account, I lost no time to come to the city, I made inquiries, learned of your misfortune, and hastened here to see you and give you my help and assistance.

Leonor. In my despondency I had accused the world, the whole world, of being deceitful; but my opinion was hasty and false, for I have friends, and I have true friends; and never will I forget the good services which you are about to render me.

Loudon. Yes you have friends, and you have true friends, and I feel myself destined to make our friendship firm and lasting.

Leonor. You inspire me with the fondest hopes.

Loudon. I am thinking of that friendship which creates, as it were, a new existence within us; which reminds us that we are born for a good and noble end; which induces us to unfold our better nature—love, kindness, charity, benevolence. Perhaps you understand my meaning, but to be more explicit, I beg you to accept the offer of my heart and hand.

Leonor. I am stunned by such a declaration, as I expected to hear anything else but this. Ask me, sir, to live or to die, and I can answer immediately, as I am ready for either, especially when I consider my present forlorn position.

Loudon. It is because you are in insurmountable difficulties that I am induced to declare myself to you; however, if I have done wrong, or given you offence, heaven knows I had no such intention and I beg your forgiveness.

Leonor. I would never take it as an offence. I was only surprised, because such a request is so inopportune at present; but we will consider the matter another time.

Loudon. Perhaps this is the right moment; who may know?

Leonor. Is there another misfortune in store for me?

Loudon. It seems you are expecting another.

Leonor. Speak, s'r, what else you know. I would like to be informed of it. Answer me; I beg you! I am so excited; I scarcely know what I am saying or doing.

Loudon. I know of nothing positive, but our fortune is very fickle indeed.

Leonor. I rejoice it is nothing——

Loudon. And fickle is our whole life.

Leonor. I thought you were the bearer of good tidings.

Loudon. So I am, madame.

Leonor. I doubt not your veracity, but——

Loudon. What causes you, madame, to let your thoughts take such a wayward course?

Leonor. Because marriage is too serious a matter; we must reflect what such a momentous step will lead to. It may be a chain which we will have to drag along through this weary life; and it might be anything else but the happiness you speak of.

Loudon. You are in distress, my lady; you reason under a shadow of gloom. I have pity on you; I pity you from the bottom of my soul.

Leonor. You are kind and generous, sir. I could almost fall on my knees to thank you; for the spirit that moves you is that of a friend, not of a lover. It is sympathy, it is your kindness, not to see me suffer. It is that love which kind hearts have for the distressed and unfortunate. The impulse is too sudden, and the love lovers possess, needs time to grow and to develop.

Loudon. The love that I possess for you, madame, is, for your worth, it is for yourself; it is the love to call you my own, to make you happy, and to be made happy by you. Give this my love whatever name you wish, define it in any language you choose, it is love, it is true love, and never was there truer love, never more sincere and durable.

Leonor. Do not cause me to act in haste; let us take time—a month, a week, or so long to gather our thoughts, as I am not prepared now to give you my assent. And if I yield to your proposal, you have my pledge, and I have yours; and what of it, if some unforeseen accident intervenes, which should render the consummation of our union impossible, then our words and pledges were false and deceiving, and our friendship, now so sincere, will turn into dislike and contempt; or, in married life, if it should come so far, we are too apt to find fault with each other, as my customs and habits are those of another country and people. Let us think, let us reflect; no, sir, it is not right, it is wrong, it is all wrong, to act in such haste.

Loudon. Reflection is the child of doubt. A doubt lets golden moments pass by; a doubt keeps us in suspense, and makes a coward of the bravest; but grasping opportunities, alone, insures victory. Reflection is a demon; it whispers false tales in your ears; it annoys you, it makes you falter in your purpose. What hesita-

tion is necessary? It takes but a moment to distinguish good from evil, a certainty from a doubt; or, do you want, by all means, to live in misery and wretchedness? It must not, it cannot be; I tremble for you!

Leonor. I have no body but myself to consult, and I owe it to myself alone to be discreet. I crave your pardon--think my conduct is due to my wayward way. I want to give you my heart and hand willingly; therefor let us defer the solemn moment for an indefinitely short time only.

Loudon. The ship on the high sea may be safe, when the weather is fair and the elements are quiet; but when a tempest arises, when the waves rise mountain-high, and the frail vessel is mercilessly tossed about like a child's toy, and is threatened to be swallowed up by the furious jaws of the sea; does not prudence suggest that a strong arm be at its helm to save and preserve it? You, dear lady, look at the misfortune around you, they may, perhaps, increase and increase. You cannot cope with the stormy elements of the world. It is impossible, the mere attempt is madness. Oh, may heaven save and protect you!

Leonor. You have touched the true vein of my situation.

Loudon. But Providence, as it were, has sent me to be a kind messenger to you, and to point out to you where the harbor of safety lies. You wish to reflect, madame; yes, do so, it is the kind of reflection you must need. Yes, reflect, do so, but I beg you to reflect well, at this moment, and on this very spot.

Leonor. I feel like I am lost and abandoned. I see in my mind the billows rise mountain-high, and yours may be a guardian voice; but I am undecided and unresolved. Forgive me, heaven knows I do not wish to hurt your feelings.

Loudon. I perceive all; you are intimidated, my lady; it is caused by the pressure of your misfortunes. You said that you do not wish to hurt my feelings; it follows, therefore, that whatever we cannot injure must possess our veneration and love. Have I expressed the true word that I possess your love? I hope I did.

Leonor. I yield—and give you my heart and hand.

Loudon. Well spoken; all that appeared ruffled on the surface will soon wear off and become bright and inviting; and I predict that a life of undescribable bliss will spread itself out before us.

Leonor. May heaven grant that your words will become true.

Loudon. With decision have I won the fairest lady in the land; and with decision, I propose that we unite in holy wedlock; and that before to-morrow's setting of the sun, we will be husband and wife, one and inseperable!

[*Exeunt.*]

[END ACT II.]

ACT III.

SCENE 1.—*A Lawn near the Plantation of Prescott.*

PRESCOtt and INEZ; afterwards MRS. LOUDON and TOM.

Prescott. I was astounded when I heard of the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Loudon. There was no courtship and no visiting; they were never seen together in society circles; and even now I cannot comprehend that such an event took place.

Inez. It may be strange, but it is true.

Prescott. Methinks it must have been a marriage brought on by the pressure of surrounding circumstances; and I presume that you, madame, as her trusted friend, are acquainted with the details.

Inez. All I know, is, that Mr. Loudon, having heard of her misfortune, improved his opportunities, proposed and was accepted, and very soon thereafter the marriage rites were performed.

Prescott. I met her yesterday in passing; and I noticed distinctly that she was much depressed.

Inez. It is on account of the unfortunate news we received from home; I know that she still grieves about it.

Prescott. I entertain some doubts.

Inez. What else could it be?

Prescott. The real grounds may be surmised.

Inez. I, too, noticed her to have been cross to our domestics, and several times she has not been very friendly to me. I called her attention to it by asking whether she was indisposed, but she evaded my question and apologized.

Prescott. Love ought to overcome all such obstacles.

Inez. It is generally so.

Prescott. But the obstacle here is—shall I pronounce the word?

Inez. You may, sir.

Prescott. It is want of love.

Inez. It is beyond what I know.

Prescott. Mr. Loudon has passed the age of youth and romance, while his lady is a child of the world; he loves the solitude and spends his time in philosophical contemplations, while she is the extreme contrast.

Inez. Withal that, Mr. Loudon is a gentleman, and they will soon accustom themselves to each other's ways.

Prescott. Is she dissatisfied with her surroundings?

Inez. Mr. Loudon wants to go traveling, but she is not pleased with the idea; he, too, thinks that her sorrow comes from her misfortune, and, therefore, lets her alone.

Prescott. She is a character that wants to be studied.

Inez. She is quite often a mystery to me.

Prescott. I see the lady is making her promenade and is coming in our direction.

Inez. It is so; she will be here almost instantly.

Prescott. I propose we walk on.

Inez. She prefers to be alone, anyhow.

Prescott. I would like to have a conversation with her.

Inez. And I must see her on matters of very great importance myself.

[Exit.]

Enter Mrs. LOUDON.

Mrs. Loudon. Those scenes of romance, where are they? They have vanished from my eyes. This is a desert, where the tropical sun burns out the fibres of the cotton plant. This is a land fit for negroes and alligators to inhabit. Swamps, too, are here, whose poisonous vapors make our blood congeal in the night, giving the crushing heat of the sun the task to thin it in the daytime, thus bringing on a deadly contest in our bodily system. But worst of all, I am mismatched and mismatched to a man whom I abhor. His slow and pedantic nature, his sickly sympathy, his dreaming contemplations, the scientific nonsense he utters, are enough to arouse in me all the spirits of demons. He knew of my despairing condition, and that I was like a trembling elk hunted down, and surrounded, on all sides, by enemies. With but a few cajoling words he could have set my fears aside; but he came cunningly and sly; he measured every step he took; he put me to fears; he overawed me with threats; he subjected me to the most excruciating anguish --to entrap me. A most foul and treacherous act it was! Oh, what a wretch, what a coward, to make use of such detestable means! And what a step, nay, what a fall for me! Accursed wedlock whos, burden makes me old and decrepid before my time; whose chains drag me down into the grave! I call on heaven, I call on Providence to free me; but Providence is silent, is mute; it answers nothing; the echo is dying within my bosom. Who comes to disturb me in my thoughts? It is Inez; I must keep secrets for myself.

Enter INEZ.

Come near, Inez, you frightened me a little; do not keep yourself so strange; my being married ought not to mar our friendship.

Inez. A most beautiful day it is.

Mrs. Loudon. The same luminaries are in our country; sun, moon and stars; they also give there light and heat.

Inez. Creation is most wonderful.

Mrs. Loudon. But the atmosphere is so different there from what it is here.

Inez. I, too, find it so.

Mrs. Loudon. Blessed be our beautiful land. I have now a greater desire to live and be there than ever before; and you, Inez, do you not think much of home?

Inez. I do, Leonor; and very soon my longed-for wishes will be fulfilled, as I have learned that a temporary armistice between the belligerent parties has been agreed upon; that the former govern-

ment will remain in power, and that very soon lasting peace will be concluded.

Mrs. Loudon. Your departure will be a terrible blow for me.

Inez. It will be sad, very sad, for me to leave you; especially when I consider how warm our friendship is, and how pleasant and agreeable our companionship has been.

Mrs. Loudon. No, Inez, you cannot go, you must not go! I know not what will become of me, when you will have left me here. Stay, I will give you everything within my power. Ask me to make any sacrifice, to induce you to remain with me, and it shall be done. Do remain, Inez; do not leave me to myself.

Inez. If you only try to make your life happy, my departure will affect you but little. You will soon learn to accustom yourself with the surroundings, and with those that are dearest to you. You will soon learn to love this country and people; and if love for our country is so great with you, its remembrance will always cling to you; it will be your constant companion, wherever you go or move, should it be to the remotest corners of the earth.

Mrs. Loudon. These recollections will be my death. The very atmosphere I inhale here is slow poison. Who comes now? It is Uncle Tom; you have something for me, Uncle Tom; it is a letter.

Enter Tom.

Tom. De Lor' bless de ladies. Massa gib me dis heah letter to mistress; he is readin' letters an' newspapers; he is a readin' now.

(Hands up the letter.)

Mrs. Loudon. This is my address; let's see; it is sent and signed—(*Opens the letter*)—Pascal; (*Reads*). “Dear Madame! I have glorious news for you. I received information that the bank, wherein you had your moneys on deposit, will resume payment, and that creditors will have to lose but a small part on their claims, or most probably receive payment in full. I am further informed, that your buildings, which were reported to have been destroyed by fire, were but slightly damaged, and that the government will make full reparation. I am furthermore advised that an armistice has been agreed upon, and that the belief prevails that very soon peace would be concluded. My sincerest congratulations.”

Tom. No answer, mam; dat b'longs to my business.

Mrs. Loudon. You may go, Uncle Tom.

Tom. Good-bye, ladies, good-bye; de Lor' bless yer?

[*Exit Tom.*]

Mrs. Loudon. Most foul imposition that has been practiced on me! Most shamefully have I been deceived! What, remain here in this desert, and pass my life in this accursed misery! Never, Inez! I confide in you, I no longer will keep it secret, I shall go with you! And I call on heaven to be my witness, that I will and must break the fetters that keep me chained to this spot of wretchedness.

Inez. What! What are you thinking and speaking, Leonor? If I had not heard you with my own ears, or seen you utter these words with my own eyes, I would not have believed it

Mrs. Loudon. Has he, who calls himself my husband, not committed a great crime on me? He persuaded me, he put me to fears, to torment, to anguish, nay, he forced me to marry him; was that just?

Inez. Will you go to South America without your husband? The news will spread far and near that you were married in the United States, that you have deserted your husband. You had pledged yourself to him before you consulted me, and considering these great misfortunes at that time, I could not dissuade you from your purpose. And now as you are about to commit a most fearful act, I, as your friend, your most trusted friend, must step between, and exhort you to beware, as evil will follow and tend to your ruin.

Mrs. Loudon. For heaven's sake, speak no further, Inez! Let no person ever know that I have spoken thus. I did not mean what I said. Forgive; I was carried away with anger. No, I will never commit such an act. It is cowardly to desert the husband, and below my dignity. Say nothing, dearest, and mention it to me no more. I ask your forgiveness. I pray you speak to me, inform me, instruct me what to do and I shall be most obedient to you.

Inez. In this manner I love to hear you speak.

Mrs. Loudon. It was not I who spoke thus; it was my southern temperament; it was my wayward way. You must overlook it, as you have overlooked so many of my faults.

Inez. And I ask you to excuse me for having scolded you, but when I do scold, it is always for your good.

Mrs. Loudon. You always have been so kind to me, and now I must ask of you another favor; of course I cannot object to your leaving me, but you must promise not to leave me so soon; and must prolong your stay with me as much as you can; this favor you will not, you cannot refuse me.

Inez. I will remain with you till you are perfectly contented with yourself and till you are reconciled with everything around you.

Mrs. Loudon. I promise you all.

Inez. Then my departing will be more agreeable to us; and I shall take the happy thought with me of having left my Leonor in happiness and contentment.

Mrs. Loudon. No more mention of what has passed between us; let us turn our attention to something else, and let me suggest that you immediately go to the city to find out more of affairs at home. Mr. Pascal, no doubt, can give you more particulars; and be kind enough to tell him that I send my sincerest thanks.

Inez. This is a very pleasant mission for me. I will likewise make inquiries when ships will depart. But I must repeat again, do not excite yourself, and fill not your mind with such eccentric things, else you may drive me from you, before you know it.

Adieu, then, Leonor, I will go to the city immediately and bring you good and cheering news.

[Exit.]

Mrs. Loudon. Here I am again, in my solitude, and the same despondent sentiments and feelings come over me. Impossible to drive them away! Oh, misery, oh, fate, I am humbled, I am crushed! I was wronged, I was robbed of the holiest, of my love, and thus am I deprived of my happiness; of my existence! I, who reigned supreme in society, who commanded, must now blindly obey the man who deceived me, and whom I detest. I cannot! Impossible! I must not endure it! But I am tied, I am weak and must lock up all grief within myself. Is there, perhaps, power in prayer? Then I turn to ye, oh gods, be ye christian or pagan. I call on ye to inspire and to lead me on. I call on the spirits of demon to give me wisdom and strength; I shall worship on your shrine, entirely and incessantly:—Who comes now to disturb me in my pleasant revelry? Away faithful friends; at some other time I shall converse with you again.

Enter PRESCOTT.

Prescott. I bid you a happy good day, madame; I recognized you from the distance and took the liberty of walking up to you.

Mrs. Loudon. Good day sir; very pleasant to be out in the air.

Prescott. I have not been here of late; however, this site of the lake has always been my favorite resort.

Mrs. Loudon. I find it very attractive here.

Prescott. By the way, madame, are you getting used to our country life?

Mrs. Loudon. Sometimes I am pleased and at other times I find myself lonely.

Prescott. There is a certain routine necessary which one has to undergo in order to become accustomed to it.

Mrs. Loudon. I have heard of many things in my life, but never of such a routine.

Prescott. At first the task is a little difficult, but very soon it is overcome.

Mrs. Loudon. I would thank you if you were to make me familiar with it.

Prescott. The first step is, that you divest yourself of all acquired city-habits; you must not give thought to the great noise and bustle; you must not recall to your mind its thriving activity and the elegance of fashionable society. Reduce all such and similar thoughts into compact ideas and press them together in the narrowest space of your mind; then concentrate all other thoughts, channel-like to rural life, and you will surely succeed.

Mrs. Loudon. I believe, sir, you are chiding me.

Prescott. Here are my reasons. If you listen to the thunder of the storm, you feel not inclined to give ear to the whispering tones of the Aeolian harp; or, should you fix your attention on huge

mountains or on the rapid current of mighty rivers, you are not apt to admire the beautiful violet.

Mrs. Loudon. There is much philosophy in your reasoning.

Prescott. And, besides, philosophy, does it not compare with the rules of practical life?

Mrs. Loudon. I cannot deny it, sir.

Prescott. The recollections of a city cannot soon be forgotten: those great thoroughfares; that centre where the world meets to see and to be seen. It is like a sun around which the smaller planets move. There you have wit, intelligence, genius, which are the moving spirits of the world; then there is art, beauty, refinement and romance; there are all shades and casts of men, from the lowest to the highest; there is evolution all the time, each day bringing forth new ideas, new life, and with that a new world.

Mrs. Loudon. A very faithful delineation!

Prescott. And, in this rural world, there is everlasting repetition; the sun rises and sets; we have light throughout the day and darkness in the night; so it has been and so it will be. But in the city, man creates night into day, and that more brilliant and luminous than the heavenly planets themselves can do; and in this creation of art, life and association possess the greatest enchantment. And have you not found it so in your experience?

Mrs. Loudon. You cause me to be sad.

Prescott. And where you, madame, reigned like a queen, and all that was at your feet.

Mrs. Loudon. I was betrayed!—For heavens! what have I said? It escaped my lips; my imagination carried me away; it is not so, sir; you forced it out of me. I am contented; I have told you a falsehood!

Prescott. I am not your enemy.

Mrs. Loudon. Be gone, sir, and approach me no more. Who asked you to come here? You have drawn a confession out of me by subtlety and cunning, and, if you possess only an atom of manliness, you will not make wrong use of it. [Exit.]

Prescott. Ah! you may feign as much as you want; you may resort to as much hypocrisy as you choose, you no longer can deceive me. I have detected her; betrayd, betrayed she was; so she said; they are her words, not mine. Betrayed! this is the word. I now know that she hates and detests her husband, and that she thirsts for liberty, but has no plans to reach it; for that she is morose. And a bird will never forget that once it was free. Yes, caught you are, and your cage is burglar-proof; you cannot escape. This is my revenge for having fought the duel. [Exit.]

Enter MRS. LOUDON.

Mrs. Loudon. He is gone; he made me acknowledge my secret; I am no longer master over it; I am in his power. He is the man who fought the duel; who brought me in this condition, and now—what! what do I see? his intent is to crush me under his heel. I see

it all now. Oh, my head! my senses! Where am I? Never shall you succeed in your designs! Never will you hurl me in the dust! It is I who will turn the knife; it is I who will make use of your own weapons, love, jealousy, blind jealousy, so that you will consume yourselves in your own fire. This is the antidote, this is the true herb which at last I have found; but no more friends of confidence to guide and mislead me. All hail then to the spirits of revenge. All thanks to you, sweet spirits, who have at last heard and accepted my prayers; and hail to the end of thralldom, whose approach I salute like the dawn of the new rising sun. [Exit.

SCENE II.—*A Lawn near the Plantation.*

Enter CHARLES and CLARA.

Chas. I have overcome the obstacle of my father, whose opposition was principally based on the contrast between us, as regards wealth and social standing; however, he is becoming reconciled, thinking as he does, that matrimony ought to be based on love or mutual liking, alone; that this is the true course and the other the irregular one; and trusts to time and wants to see me happy.

Clara. I rejoice that you are reconciled with your side.

Chas. As regards yourself, dearest, I suggest, as everything in your family goes its wanted course, that you confer with your father, or rather, parents, on this matter; of course in your own way and manner.

Clara. It is a delicate matter for me to approach him; besides, I have reasons to believe that he will speak to me on something similar. I saw him recently engaged in conversation with Mr. Edmonds' father, and almost immediately after that he intimated to me that he wanted to speak to me on a very important subject, and this is about the time he wants to see me.

Chas. Is your father aware of our intimacy or love?

Clara. It is highly probable, for I have refused Mr. Edmonds' offer; and through that it might have leaked out.

Chas. I, too, believe that the secret is no longer our own, for on meeting Mr. Edmonds recently, he seemed to bear a deep grudge against me.

Clara. The question is about to culminate in a termination. Let us cut short our meeting, to be continued in the near future, as duty prompts me to see my father.

Chas. Go then and be of good cheer!

Clara. And be you likewise!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III. *A room in the mansion of Loudon.*

Enter Loudon, Mrs. Loudon, and afterward Clara.

Loudon. Mr. Edmonds says Clara refused him several times. The old Mr. Edmonds, the father, a very clever gentleman approached me, too, on the same subject, knowing, as he does, my wish and desire in the self-same direction. Taking all in all, it is best, I think, we take the matter up at once and bring it to a solution.

Mrs. Loudon. I will do my utmost to see her happy and contented.

Loudon. For that reason, it is my desire that you be present at this our meeting; it likewise adds greater importance to the occasion; then, it being a family affair, it is by all means proper. Here comes our daughter now; glad that you are here Clara.

Enter Clara.

Clara. Good day, parents, I am very happy to see you.

Loudon. Come near to us, Clara. It is just as I predicted; every kind of ceremony will you place to true and lasting cordiality, and I am very glad that you and mother are becoming so attached to each other.

Mrs. Loudon. I owe an apology to Clara. I have lately been disturbed in my mind, which could not have escaped unnoticed; but we, our sex, are best familiar with our eccentricities, and I trust, that Clara will not reproach me for not having been attentive enough to her.

Clara. I must protest against your remarks, dear mother, as I saw nothing in your conduct to find fault with; on the contrary, I had censured myself for not being more attentive towards you.

Loudon. If you vie with each other to be kind and friendly, there needs nothing more be said; we will therefore proceed at once to a matter which concerns you, and you only, our child..

Clara. I am giving you all attention.

Loudon. Of course, we mean your welfare and happiness, for we have nothing else at heart but that.

Clara. The past, dear father, fully attests your present attitude..

Loudon. There is nothing under the sun which we consider too good or too dear for you; and I will add, that, until lately you had but a father, you have now a mother who, too, loves you with all devotion and affection.

Mrs. Loudon. You re-echo my sentiments, Mr. Loudon.

Loudon. We want to be brief, our child; we have selected for you your future husband; he is a gentleman, whose character is model-like, and whose standing ranks very high in this community. We mean Mr. Edmonds. You have known each other from childhood; you inhaled the same air and are well known to everybody in your midst. His family belongs to the most respected in the

community, and, I may add, his ancestors, on the mother's side, have served our country with glory and distinction, and we doubt not that you are well pleased and thank us for our choice.

Mrs. Loudon. I will offer my congratulations as soon as the assenting answer is given, which, surely, will follow my words.

Clara. I have never, in any mode or manner, wilfully disobeyed my father, or acted contrary to his will or wishes; and even now would I so cheerfully accept what you, dear parents, offer, for I know full well how kindly and sincerely it is meant, were it not beyond my power or will.

Loudon. Beyond your power and will?

Clara. I beg a thousand times your pardon if I have given offence.

Loudon. Do my senses deceive me?

Clara. As you desire me to speak, and with all deference to you, dear parents, I will say that I shall not wed Mr. Edmonds, as I have no love for him; and if that gentleman were possessed of more delicacy of manners, he would not act thus, in almost forcing me to an act, which time and again, I have told him, I would never consent to enter into.

Loudon. I protest against such utterances; because we have given Mr. Edmonds more or less encouragement; besides he is a true gentleman; he has not overstepped the bounds of good breeding; and I am sure, with all the faults he may possess, he has always treated you with courtesy and respect.

Clara. I retract my remarks; I acknowledge my indiscretion in having spoken thus in the gentleman's absence.

Loudon. I proceed a step further: the rumor goes through the neighborhood, it is already in everybody's mouth (at least so I understood it) that you had given your heart and hand to the blacksmith's son; and I say this, that if a person were to approach me or you with such an intimation, surely I or you, would have just cause to look upon it as an insult.

Clara. I acknowledge that I have given him my heart and hand; and in justice to him as well as to myself, I beg to say that he is a gentleman of honor.

Loudon (to *Mrs. Loudon*). Have you heard this? If so, please answer for me; I believe I misunderstood our young lady.

Mrs. Loudon. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the customs of this country, and least of all, with courtship and marrying. Not alone that, customs are so diversified:—every city, every village, every hamlet, however small in numbers, has its own peculiar rules and customs of etiquette, which persons grow up with and will adhere to. But should I speak, I must say that position in society, is always to be preferred; a certainty better than an uncertainty, and a cavalier more acceptable than a mechanic. Of course, dearest, I will not lecture you. I only said this in a very friendly manner; and my only desire is, to see you happy and contented.

Clara. Thanks, mother: I know not whether a correction will

avail anything; but for truth's sake, I will say that the gentleman is not a mechanic; and, were he—

Loudon. This is becoming unbearable!

Mrs. Loudon. (To Mr. Loudon.) You must moderate yourself, by all means, or I am obliged to take part against you.

Loudon. I believe the young man studied jurisprudence, but has no position in the world, nor in society, and perhaps never will have. The father is a blacksmith, and I take him to be a good blacksmith. Nobody knows who he is, or where he comes from, and nobody would care about it. I remember when he came to this region; it was several years ago; but cannot tell whether he bought the piece of ground he is living on, or whether some charitable person made him a present of it. And this is the class of people, our young lady is taken in with.

Mrs. Loudon. This, I believe, is Clara's first love. She soon will meet another beau and give to the new one her attention. I know it is the practice with young ladies to have several; to change old for new ones, and keep some in reserve.

Clara. I have no words of complaint or reproach.

Loudon. I pardon your indiscretion, which is owing to your young years and inexperience. Listen, my child, society has its rules and laws, and is as old as the world itself. Men will separate and associate with each other, according to taste, choice and cast. It is a right, a law, unchangeable, which we find in all creation, be it animal, plant or mineral. As regards ourselves, we esteem honor, virtue and worth, and do not hurt the feelings of others; fools do that. The world is composed of many shades of persons; this should be so, and let each adhere to its own kind and make the best of it.

Clara. Then our better nature must be subservient to the dictates of society.

Loudon. Your mind is too idealistic, my child; you lack the knowledge and experience of the world. Society dictates and ever will; but romance floats in the air. With eagle's wings it flies into the invisible heights of the heavens and then, then turns into—nothing. I pray you, Clara, be honest to yourself. Your feelings overpower you. I beg you, lay all your ideas aside, they tend to nothing; and leave your welfare in our hands.

Mrs. Loudon. The question has been rather philosophically treated, and I propose that we let it rest here, to take it up again in the near future, when we will all be in a better humor; then, this putting off, will give Clara the opportunity to consider the matter in the light we view it.

Loudon. I very much admire your tact and foresight, Mrs. Loudon. Clara has always been a good child and I have no doubt she will come to the better conclusion and let our wishes prevail.

(*Exeunt Loudon and Mrs. Loudon.*)

Clara. Such expressions cut and wound deep, deep! Such

vain-gloriousness is shocking; which ignores the holiest; which makes truth hide its head in shame, and causes hypocrisy and conceit to triumph. Nay, I will never turn faithless to my lover. I would shrink back with horror from my own shadow, as he is true to himself as well as to me.

[Exit.]

SCENE IV.—*In the same Room.*

Enter Mrs. LOUDON AND EDMONDS.

Mrs. Loudon. Mr. Loudon and myself have just had a conversation on the same subject with Miss Clara; and our meeting was quite a spirited one.

Edmonds. A spirited one? that bodes no good.

Mrs. Loudon. That wants to be seen.

Edmonds. Is the young lady still obstinate?

Mrs. Loudon. Very obstinate; she has a powerful will.

Edmonds. May I address myself to you, madame.

Mrs. Loudon. I have taken your part already.

Edmonds. I mean by way of advice. I have been informed that you possess great knowledge of the world; and you being so near related to the young lady, I should beg you to give me some suggestions.

Mrs. Loudon. To gain the young lady's affection and love, I presume.

Edmonds. First, I should like to have her good will.

Mrs. Loudon. You are very ingenious sir; you want to know of me, how young ladies are persuaded, how they are driven and wedged in. You are very acute; you want me to give you my knowledge of it. I see you manage your side in a masterly manner; but let me ask you, must the young lady yield by all means to your importunities? But no—I should not ask you that; I want to know of you whether you are an able talker; this is the principal requisite.

Edmonds. I have tried all my conversational powers and have most signally failed.

Mrs. Loudon. Poor Clara, she is very brave, or obstinate, I should have said.

Edmonds. She would never have cause to regret such a step.

Mrs. Loudon By-the-by, who is the young man she is in love with? I have heard something of him but not sufficient to judge by.

Edmonds. He is a young man who studied well at school; his father is a blacksmith by profession. Position in society, these people have none; and that is about all that is known of them.

Mrs. Loudon. And the son of a blacksmith is your rival?

Edmonds. I feel ashamed to acknowledge it.

Mrs. Loudon. Young ladies are powerless, they must yield; but a man is surely able to find means to accomplish his ends. Do I infer from your conversation that you are powerless?

Edmonds. It is for this reason alone I address myself to you.

Mrs. Loudon. Mr. Loudon, perhaps, could better advise you than I; but let it be — you have come to me and I must say, that if you are a man, you must fight your own battle.

Edmonds. I have tried all and am at my wit's end.

Mrs. Loudon. And you are a man, a gentleman, a cavalier, of course! A young lady may groan and weep; she may grieve herself to death, but a man has his strength, his daring and courage. Of course, I suggest nothing; then there is nothing of that necessary; for everything comes natural with man; besides necessity will always suggest a remedy.

Edmonds. Your words inspire me with the fondest hopes; they are soul-inspiring and full of wisdom.

Mrs. Loudon. I have said nothing at all. I only said that with a man everything comes on naturally; they call it self-reliance in common language.

Edmonds. Be it so; I will hereafter rely on myself.

Mrs. Loudon. I knew that it would work with you in this manner.

Edmonds. And if necessary, will resort to everything that is expedient to further my object.

Mrs. Loudon. You are on the right track, sir; for that are you men, for that are you strong.

Edmonds. I understand you fully, madame; hereafter I shall trust to myself, alone, as through that I will have your sanction and good will; my sincerest thanks, my lady! Adieu. [Exit.]

Mrs. Loudon. What step is he now going to take? "Resort to everything that is expedient" said he. I would never blame myself having suggested to him to take an extreme course, because I could not have spoken otherwise; and Clara, though she has my sympathies, I cannot openly side with her, else I will bring on me the anger of her father. This matter I must let take its own course, bring my own plans to maturity, and devote all attention to myself; here he comes—

Enter Loudon.

I have just had a spicy conversation with Mr. Edmonds.

Loudon. I saw him leave the house, in very great haste. He had of late a slow and measured gait, but to me he appeared like elasticity itself. Your conversation, I presume, must have cheered him up.

Mrs. Loudon. I encouraged him by telling him to be manly; not to give himself up to grief and to fight it out by self-reliance.

Loudon. Well done; Clara will surely come to her senses, she has always been a very obedient child and I ascribe this reluc-tance to her eccentric ways.

Mrs. Loudon. Clara is in this respect like all other young girls: as strongly as she at first adheres to a certain aim, so easily is she

led off again, but only by degrees. Just give her a little time and leave everything to me.

Loudon. You possess my entire confidence; and, as we have partly straightened up Clara's affairs, let us turn to your own. You remember, before we spoke to Clara, you intimated to me that you wanted to make a communication to me; and this being a fit time, we will give it our immediate attention and bring it at once, to a solution.

Mrs. Loudon. You are very kind, dear husband.

Loudon. Have you any wish? and, if it is in my power to comply with it, be kind enough to let me know it; as I have only your happiness and contentment at heart.

Mrs. Loudon. I beg pardon. Those intimations I made, oh, I should have said nothing at all.

Loudon. Why not?

Mrs. Loudon. They were whims of mine.

Loudon. Are you so timid as to fear to express yourself? Then you must not attach the blame to me; and if the matter is so unimportant, we will speak no more of it.

Mrs. Loudon. I wish I had said nothing at all.

Loudon. You arouse my curiosity.

Mrs. Loudon. It is nothing.

Loudon. Does it concern yourself, dearest? Undoubtedly it does, else you would not treat the matter in this manner. I noticed long ago that you were depressed in spirits. I thought it was on account of your misfortunes in South America, wherefore I asked you no questions, thinking that time would heal up all those wounds. But as you apply yourself to me so directly, I cannot afford to pass it over in silence.

Mrs. Loudon. I scarcely know what to say.

Loudon. I beg you dearest, state to me, what you desire. I do not want to hear you complain, or to see you wanting in anything.

Mrs. Loudon. I fear it will aggravate you.

Loudon. Aggravate me, when I may be of assistance to you? Is it not my bounden duty to see you happy? Be frank with me; state your wish to me, so that I may think, act, devise or do something to dispel all your sorrows; and do not keep me in such suspense!

Mrs. Loudon. I wish I had never mentioned anything.

Loudon. Upon my honor (and not to be rude to you), for you know my feelings and sentiments towards you, I must insist upon knowing it.

Mrs. Loudon. It weighs heavily upon my conscience.

Loudon. It weighs heavily upon your conscience? Do I hear aright? Have you committed a wrong against the laws of the land? against society, against yourself, against me? Heaven forbid, I crave your pardon; you have committed no wrong against anybody; it is my crime to speak thus. But I pray you, dearest, speak to me, for your troubles are my own, and since we are bound

together by the holy vows of matrimony, besides it being my duty, it is my most fervent desire to protect you in all that belongs to human affairs.

Mrs. Loudon. I am between two fires; for if I speak it would cause the greatest disturbance, and were I to remain silent, heaven forbid, it would prove my perfidy and faithlessness.

Loudon. Faithlessness! Perfidy! Is your honor at stake? I swear, by the heavens, that he who oversteps these bounds must suffer the penalty of death!

Mrs. Loudon. I can no longer deny it.

Loudon. What! Is such the truth? Give me name, the time, the place, the details: Who is it, friend or foe, angel, devil or whatever form it may assume? Tell me who it is that dares to enter upon the threshold of our sanctity, I grasp him by the throat, I will choke him till his breath will have gone out of him; I will tread upon him, till life is extinct, and crush his body to thousands of atoms. Ah, I thirst for his blood; I want revenge, and such revenge as the crime deserves.

Mrs. Loudon. I knew what my speaking would lead to; I knew how it would effect you; I knew that it would be like a two-edged sword, dangerous to grasp on either side. I tremble when I look you in the face; your eyes shoot fire; your veins swell up like chords; the blood rushes up to your head and your whole frame is shaking with fury and rage. Is this becoming a gentleman? First, control yourself and be not led blindly and by the moment.

Loudon. Can I be silent when a wrong—

Mrs. Loudon. I swear to heaven that I will not speak another word, if you behave and act in this rude manner.

Loudon. Forgive, forgive me! I ought to fall on my knees, to crave your pardon, for having forgotten myself. I ought to have known that your character was pure, that you are true to yourself and to me. Forgive me, that I permitted myself to be blinded. Your own voluntary speaking, alone, proves your constancy and faith. Oh, forgive, forgive! 'Tis true, I suffered myself to be carried away by the moment; but remember, it was for a sacred cause; it was my love which I cherish for you; it was the momentary outburst of outraged feelings; it was beyond my power and control; therefor, forgive, forgive me dearest!

Mrs. Loudon. You are not responsible for your conduct; it is I, who am to be blamed, for having mentioned the matter.

Loudon. It is true I made you speak against your will; no blame can rest with you; and I beg you now to proceed, dear wife. Tell me all, whatever you have to say, I will give you my whole attention, and I give you my sacred pledge that I will not interrupt you.

Mrs. Loudon. This is wisdom; this is foresight; and it is becoming you. And, now, I will unfold everything, and we will surely come to a thorough understanding.

Loudon. I am overjoyed having satisfied you.

Mrs. Loudon. Listen well; and no more interruption; it is your honor that is at stake as well as mine; and for this reason I could not, with good conscience, keep the matter longer within myself; because I would thereby commit a great wrong against you; and if by chance, or by any other direct or indirect means you were to find out any traces, it would deprive you of your quiet, or you would (because of my silence) accuse me of the wrong.

Loudon. Never! My faith in you lasts as long as a shadow of breath is within me.

Mrs. Loudon. Understand then right; almost every morning, since we were married, I have taken a stroll along-side the lake; while you were sitting on the veranda engaged, in reading your letters and newspapers.

Loudon. This is very true.

Mrs. Loudon. I always walked towards the great curve, and there on the bench, I have found, several times, written notes; they were in a gentleman's handwriting, but not signed. These letters, or notes, contained declarations of love and all sorts of sentimental outpourings, and were written in prose and sometimes in verse. I would read them, but let them lie there, thinking that some fantastic swain had placed them there for his lady love, and that was all the thought I ever gave to it. But listen well, what happened. The gentleman came soon himself, and—made me love declarations. I expostulated with him in the strongest terms, and thought this the end. Yesterday, however, I went in the same direction and to the same place, found another note lying there, and a few minutes thereafter the gentleman again appeared before me, making his usual harangue of love. I then hastened immediately to my room, and while in the act of delivering the note to the flames, the thought flashed over my mind (for I most keenly felt that an outrage had been practiced upon me,) that it was the highest time to pluck the fruit, and as quick as the thought itself, I snatched the piece of paper from the burning flames and saved a small fragment of it. And this is what weighed so heavily upon my conscience, and this alone is what induced me to bring it to your knowledge.

Loudon. And were you without assistance or protection?

Mrs. Loudon. He was very careful that no one be present.

Loudon. But who is the gentleman? who is the man capable of committing such a deed?

Mrs. Loudon. The man of whom you would least suspect it, your friend, Mr. Prescott.

Loudon. Mr. Prescott? Impossible! It is almost preposterous to think of it! It is a mistake! Give me proof; give me positive proof, so that I may realize his committing such an outrage on us.

Mrs. Loudon. Here is the note, or so much of it as I was able to save from the flames. It is badly scorched, though, perhaps, you may yet be able to make out a few letters. [hands him the note.]

Loudon. (Looks at it.) What a horrible deed!

Mrs. Loudon. Do you want other proof?

Loudon. What! anything else?

Mrs. Loudon. That duel he fought--

Loudon. 'Tis so; this no longer leaves the least doubt in my mind.

Mrs. Loudon. Such are friends. The best cannot be trusted. It is fearful. It is a very bad sign of the times, when you are deceived in such a manner; when you cannot trust your best friend; and it was because you considered him your nearest friend that I felt reluctant to accuse him of a wrong, knowing as I do how much it would grieve you.

Loudon. How corrupt humanity is, to rob a man of his dearest and holiest! Who would have believed or thought it? Oh, I have faith in you only; you, alone, are true to me; and if all this world is false, you will never deceive me.

Mrs. Loudon. I regret that it has given you so much pain. I trust you will not blame me for having given you the information. I kept it from your knowledge as long as I possibly could.

Loudon. If you are only satisfied, that is all I care for.

Mrs. Loudon. I propose to let the matter rest here, and think no more about it.

Loudon. To that I will never agree. I am a man of peace, but shrink not back where my duty is, to shield and protect my dearest. I will meet the man face to face. Silence would be acquiescence and forbearance, detestable cowardice. I am not possessed of that mean and grovelling spirit, so as to keep this matter locked up within myself; he shall, and must answer for the wrong he has committed on us.

Mrs. Loudon. By no means act the aggressor; but I suggest that you first convince yourself. I wish you to witness his behavior, and should it be in the same insulting manner, at a time when you are cool and collected (or it may be that he has repented by this time), then judge him and deal with him in the manner he deserves.

Loudon. This is by far the most prudent way.

Mrs. Loudon. And listen further to my suggestion: To-morrow morning I shall again walk along the banks of the lake, and it will likely happen that the gentleman will be there again and approach me in the manner told. You take your position behind the bushes and trees and listen well to our conversation, and when you have heard enough, step forth from your concealment, confront him face to face, eye to eye, then and there. Denial will be out of question, and you will have him fully in your power. But by no means take his life; I forbid you that, because my honor and good name are at stake, and because the gentleman had a difficulty about me before; but make him cower before you; force him to kneel at my feet; make him beg my forgiveness and yours, and cause him to tremble like an aspen leaf. This will be my revenge and your triumph!

Loudon. You are wiser than I. Lead on, I will follow.

(*Exeunt.*)

[END ACT III.]

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ACT IV.

A room in the mansion of Loudon.

Enter Mrs. Loudon and Inez.

Inez. I stayed longer in the city than I intended; because Mr. Pascal expected every hour, almost, to receive more definite news from South America; but nothing came; and not wishing to keep you longer in suspense, I concluded to return, and inform you of it; so, then, we must curb our impatience a little longer.

Mrs. Loudon. What thinks Mr. Pascal, generally, of the condition, hemme?

Inez. He says that it is altogether out of reason and good sense to embark for home at the present, and that I should not worry, but to wait; that the hour would soon be at hand when I could go there in safety; so you and I can remain together for a while.

Mrs. Loudon. Now, I come to ask another favor of you.

Inez. Nothing is too much for me to do, to please you.

Mrs. Loudon. Mr. Loudon wants to purchase of Mr. Prescott, a piece of land; the land is in our immediate vicinity, and is to be used specially for my pleasure and purposes.

Inez. Your mind is always active.

Mrs. Loudon. The weather is clear and beautiful, and I desire you to take our new team and drive over to Mr. Prescott's residence; tell him that I have sent you; that Mr. Loudon and myself expect to meet him at the promenade, near the lake, at the usual hour to-morrow morning.

Inez. And will you not accompany me?

Mrs. Loudon. I decline to do so at present; take one of our maids along, that will answer as well.

Inez. A piece of land, for your pleasure? that looks like contenting yourself? but supposing, I do not find Mr. Prescott at home?

Mrs. Loudon. I dislike all such apprehensions, as thinking, supposing, expecting; or, if I can, if I would, if I were; say you will find him, you will make him come, and you will invariably succeed.

Inez. Your same old impatience.

Mrs. Loudon. Whenever doubtful words or phrases are used, there is failure from the beginning. But by your will you can create wonders, you can make impossible things possible; nay, you can create a world for yourself. Thousands of people live and do not know that they live; they lack confidence; they command nothing and achieve nothing; the world drags these along. This is enough lecturing for the present; of course, I make the appli-

cation to myself, not to you, dearest; and now go, deliver your message; you will surely find the gentleman at his residence.

Inez. You are a true child of the south, quick, fickle and impetuous; and having heard you speak so full of confidence, I am certain that I will meet the gentleman. [Exit.

Mrs. Loudon. This meeting must never take place; I will feign sickness or invent another excuse. To my husband the scheme must appear natural, as I have informed him of it; to Prescott it is of a dubious character, which his adventurous spirit will easily take hold of. The plot is laid, and with glowing hopes shall I look to its coming development.

[Exit.

SCENE II. *On an open ground, on the highway, in the neighborhood of the plantation of Loudon.*

Enter EDMONDS and RICHARD; afterwards CHARLES.

Edmonds. Were he of our blood or kin, I would not complain, because we are all congenial fellows, and in love matters some one must get the best. We may fret for a while, but it does not last and is soon forgotton. But a defeat from a blacksmith, from such a low source, will be a disgrace on me as long as I live.

Richard. It is almost in everybody's mouth that you are about to be left.

Edmonds. Even children will point their fingers at me; so I fear, that anger and mortification will soon consume me.

Richard. What shall I do with my young miss? she frets and spouts, when I merely mention the name of love, and is getting worse and worse.

Edmonds. Let my affair be straightened up first, as I set my greatest hope on the assistance of the parents; and then I will give you my help.

Richard. I cannot see what gives this blacksmith's son such a big name:—listen friend, it amounts to this: All his school-mates, and we all, study for just so much as is necessary for us to know; or we study for pastime, or to appear a little wise and accomplished. At any rate we will not trouble ourselves too much about it. Now, then, everybody who studies or wants to study from morning till night, and half the night for years and years, is bound to know something in the end. There is nothing impossible about it. I can do it, you can do it, and everybody else can if they want to. And who, tell me, does hard study now-a-days? Only fellows who want to become school-masters; or those who are forced to make a living by it; but we, we are gentlemen, we have wealth to rely on, we have rich relations we can depend on; we can follow other occupations; we need not study ourselves to death; we take in as much as we need and that is all.

Edmonds. He is a book-worm; and a book-worm is a fool, an idiot. Who wants to be a book-worm? You or I? Never! Is it smartness that makes this young blacksmith? Not at all. It is the laziness and indifference of his class-mates and of us all.

Richard. Now you have it; it is our laziness and indifference that makes him. He is coming; he is coming toward us; let us quit talking about him.

Edmonds. We will let him pass and not notice him at all; let us make out like we were observing something.

Richard. He will be here in a few moments.

Edmonds. All the gall and venom I have swallowed on his account, comes back upon me with such power and strength, that I could hurl it at him and wipe him out of existence.

Enter CHARLES.

Chas. Fine day, gentlemen! Standing here motionless and apparently engrossed in deep meditation, one is apt to think you are engaged in solving some difficult mathematical or scientific problem.

Richard. Quite scientific it is; we have been waiting for you to help us out.

Edmonds. Just a moment ago we discussed what influence the moon has on lovers when they meet.

Chas. This makes several conditions necessary: lovers to love; the moon to be shining; and to shine when they meet.

Richard. You are extremely smart, sir; you can solve almost any problem.

Edmonds. Then we had a conversation on evolution, or revolution, or whatever you call that thing.

Chas. A very broad subject.

Richard. I think you are well versed on evolution. You could give us some valuable information about that, judging from your great scholarship; you know.

Chas. I have devoted some attention to it, but not enough to speak or to lecture on.

Edmonds. Morals, I believe, you are good on. You ought to turn your attention in that direction; and I think you have the material in you to make a splendid parson. This is a capital idea. Then, you could get all the old women and old maids in the country to listen to you. They can help you to build up a reputation; they can help you to it; it is a dead certainty. How would that sound, Dick! "Parson Thomas!" Ha, ha, ha!

Richard. That's rich, "Parson Thomas;" that's rich.

Chas. Such remarks are uncalled for.

Richard. We talk what we please, sir.

Edmonds. Who recognized you? Who asked you to come here and mix yourself up with our private affairs? How dare you? Are you our peer? No, sir, we do not stoop so low as to recognize you. We want to have nothing to do with you. You must go somewhere else! Go on, go on your way, sir!

Chas. Have you lost your senses?

Richard. What do you stand here for? We owe you no explanation, sir.

Edmonds. His royal blood is boiling.

Richard. His royal pride is getting ruffled.

Edmonds. I believe he is getting ready to resent it. Ha ha!

Chas. I think this is all a joke, and I must say a very vulgar one.

Richard. It is getting richer every time.

Edmonds. Go on, blacksmith! Go on your way, or we will set you bottom up!

Chas. You miserable cowards! you idlers! you vagabonds! Do you think that I am bound to bear your insults? You blackguards, liars and scoundrels! I dare you show your colors!

Edmonds. I will adjust the matter with you. You call us blackguards, liars and scoundrels. We are gentlemen, sir. This must be settled, and settled immediately.

Chas. Get your weapons ready; make your own choice—guns, pistols, daggers, knives, or whatever else you wish.

Edmonds. Knives! Knives let us have, if you want me to choose. Here they are, of equal length and strength. We brought them here for another purpose, but they are now like a God-send.

Chas. Knives, then, we will have, and let us do our work quickly.

Edmonds. And you, Dick, act as our second; and see that our fight is a fair one.

Richard. Here are knives for two. Fair play throughout, and for all. Ready!

[*Swords or knives may be used, as propriety or custom may suggest.*]

Edmonds. (To Charles) Are you ready?

Chas. I am.

Richard. Proceed, gentlemen!

[*They fight. Edmonds receives a wound.*]

Edmonds. I am wounded. One moment, let me draw my breath.

Chas. Let us stop this murder-practice; you have forced me to it against my will.

Edmonds. Never! I cannot live either way; and if I have to die, do your work well, or you will lose your own life.

Richard. Whatever has a beginning must have an ending. Ready!

Edmonds. Ready.

Chas. At your say so.

[*They fight. Edmonds receives a second wound.*]

Edmonds. I am wounded to the heart! Air I want—the veins are cut—more air—I am dying!

[*Staggers, falls and dies.*]

Chas. He is dead! I stabbed him in the heart! The deed is

done! Heaven knows I did not want to commit this deed of horror! I am innocent of the crime; the guilt and all blame rests on you and him.

Richard. Get out of my sight, or I shall take my revenge on you. He was my friend, and the only true friend that I had. Out of my sight, or I will carve you to pieces!

Chas. The truth is perverted. I am lost, I am lost! [Exit.

Richard. Help, murder, help! My best friend is gone! Awake! open your eyes, your mouth; speak to me, friend, that I may help you; no, he does not speak, he is dead, he is lifeless and speechless, he will never speak again. He is dead, he is gone, my best friend is gone! No more will his feet press the earth again. No more can I grasp your hand as of my living friend. Dead, dead you are, and all that was good and kind in you, is gone from me forever! Farewell, farewell, friend! I can speak no more, all my strength is giving way to my grief.

Enter OFFICER No. 1.

Officer No. 1. Some person must be in distress. I have heard cries of murder, and help. It is bound to be in this direction; I cannot be mistaken.

Enter OFFICER No. 2.

Officer No. 2. I am almost sure that this is the place the cry came from.

Officer No. 1. Here is the man; he must have committed a crime.

Officer No. 2. This is young Mr. Edmonds lying here; he is lifeless, dead; he has been murdered.

Officer No. 1. Terrible sight! The only son of his parents.

Officer No. 2. A great calamity for them.

Officer No. 1. Who has committed this crime! Speak, sir, and awake from your sleep; and tell us who committed this deed.

Richard, (raising himself.) No guilt can be attached to me. I am innocent; I am as innocent as you are. I had nothing to do with it. I only saw it, and I will tell you all I know. Oh, my friend, my best friend is gone!

Officer No. 1. We want no evasions. Answer? Yes or No; whether you had anything to do with it or not; and who the perpetrator was.

Richard. It was young Thomas, the blacksmith's son. Mr. Edmonds and I, were engaged in friendly conversation, when he came here and forced himself into our presence and company. He intermeddled with our conversation and used insulting language. My friend, who now lies here, murdered, could not constrain himself to bear the insult, and like a true gentleman, wanted to resent it; and this is the fruit of his manliness and bravery.

Officer No. 2. It will shock the whole community.

Richard. He is innocent, and there lies he murdered, weltering

in his blood. There never lived a better soul; there never was a truer friend.

Officer No. 2. We ought remain here no longer.

Officer No. 1. Let us remove the body to a more convenient place, at once; or what is better, to his own home and family; and inform our citizens of the crime that has been committed, and let justice be meted out, so that evil-doers will be made to tremble before its behests and decrees.

[*Exeunt; carrying off the body.*

SCENE III.—*A room in the mansion of Loudon.*

Enter Mrs. Loudon, Inez, afterwards Prescott.

Inez. I met Mr. Prescott in person.

Mrs. Loudon. And what was his reply?

Inez. He was surprised about this land matter, and thought there must be some mistake; then, after a while, as if having refreshed his memory, the gentleman said that "If Mrs. Loudon wants to see me to-morrow morning, I will be very glad to meet her."

Mrs. Loudon. Have you told him that Mr. Loudon, likewise, wants to meet him?

Inez. Most assuredly. At first he could not understand the matter; but on my leaving him, said, he would attend to it.

Mrs. Loudon. I have been told of the project by Mr. Loudon himself, and I am not informed how much or how little Mr. Prescott knows of it. It is possible that I misunderstood Mr. Loudon; that he said he intended making such a purchase, and, in my basitiveness, I construed it for completing it.

Inez. At any rate, let us hope that it will be to your satisfaction.

Mrs. Loudon. And is it your actual intent to depart so soon?

Inez. No sooner than official peace will have been proclaimed.

Mrs. Loudon. May heaven grant it.

Inez. Day and night have I wished for the golden opportunity to come; because I have dear friends and relatives at home, and my heart and mind are always with them. Think not ill of me, Leonor.

Mrs. Loudon. I want to see you happy, my friend; go.

Inez. And in this happiness I feel wretched to leave you here, you whom I so much love and have loved. I likewise love this country; I never knew how much I was attached to it till now; and most dearly do I love the friends, to whom you are related by the ties of matrimony.

Mrs. Loudon. What do I experience? My head—my heart—it is nothing.

Inez. What ails you, Leonor?

Mrs. Loudon. It is nothing—I see—what do I see? Nothing, it is gone.

Inez. You are ill.

Mrs. Loudon. Not so; be gone *Inez*.

Inez. You want rest.

Mrs. Loudon. I feel indisposed; it is--through the late excitement--leave me to myself--I want to lie down; go *Inez*, go; I will see you to-morrow--go (*kisses Inez*); go *Inez*, I will see you to-morrow (*turns her face in the opposite direction*).

Inez. (*aside*) What strange behavior! It is sorrow, caused by being forced to remain here. She cannot control herself; I must leave her alone. [Exit.]

Mrs. Loudon. I felt a pang in my breast; what was it? I know it not. It was something; it prevented me from breathing. Is there anything or anybody near? Have I taken fright? It was a pain. Oh, it is the pang of sorrow and regret that I see slowly approaching. Or, heaven, what have I done? Oh, woe and misery, I am wedded to calamities! I fear—I fear nothing! Nothing do I fear. I am not panic-stricken. Oh, am I so weak that I shall fall in despair for the deeds others have committed? Never! I have done nothing. I took up the weapon to make them suffer the penalty they have so justly merited. Who comes now?

Enter PRESCOTT (hastily).

Prescott. Do I find you here?

Mrs. Loudon. What prompts you to enter in this impudent manner?

Prescott. Your message, the land matter. I want your explanation.

Mrs. Loudon. Are you a madman?

Prescott. Mr. Loudon came to me in a wild rage; he accused me of having written letters to you, of having offered you insults; that I had abused his friendship, that I had violated his sanctity and home. I wanted to prove to him my innocence, but he was wild with fury and anger; he would listen to no explanation, and called me a scoundrel and black villain. I begged him to listen, but his rage knew no bounds, and seeing that I had nothing to hope for, I told him that I was armed. He then drew his weapon on me, but missed his aim, and I, in my sacred right of self-defence, accomplished on him what he failed to do on me—he is dead!

Mrs. Loudon. Dead! And you come over my threshold to tell me of the murder you committed?

Prescott. I charge you to be the immediate cause. I have written no love letters to you. I have offered you no insults. The land question was invented by you to entrap me; you have murdered your husband, and the deed cries to heaven for revenge and retribution!

Mrs. Loudon. If you have murdered my husband, look to it yourself; but beware sir, to impugn my honor, or I will pluck out your eyes; I will bury my fingers in your face; I shall have your body carved out in pieces and thrown to the dogs. You have

murdered my husband? get out of my presence immediately, or I will forget myself.

Prescott. I have another tale to tell to the world.

Mrs. Loudon. So have I; that duel--

Prescott. I am vanquished.

Mrs. Loudon. I will deal leniently with you: Tell the truth; attribute the broil to a mutual misunderstanding that arose in regard to a land question; say you acted in self defence, and you may be safe; but beware, sir, of bringing up my good name in this affair, or I will crush you in the manner your deed deserves.

Prescott. You have won; but the avenging Nemesis--

Mrs. Loudon. has struck--

Prescott. And will reach you in the end!

[END ACT IV.]

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ACT V.

On the highway near the plantation.

Enter THOMAS and CLARA.

Clara. Whither are you traveling sir? I know that you have had a great misfortune of late; pray, tell me, whether I can be of help to you?

Thomas. Young lady, I thank you; I need nothing, nothing whatever.

Clara. May I ask you where your journey leads?

Thomas. I am going, I know not myself. I wish it were to my grave.

Clara. To your grave!

Thomas. My son, my only child, is gone.

Clara. Where is your son?

Thomas. I know not; heaven only knows.

Clara. I mourn with you.

Thomas. Bless you, my lady.

Clara. Do you know where your son is, and whether he is well?

Thomas. I cannot answer whether he is alive or dead.

Clara. If you know not where he is, would it not be better to trust to his good fortune and to providence, and you remain here?

Thomas. I cannot remain; I must go.

Clara. Are you strong enough to travel a great distance?

Thomas. I will explain to you, my chil'd. I am broken down in spirit as well as in body. The sinews of my arms, at one time strong as iron, are almost paralized, and will hardly assist me to earn my bread. My wife is in great distress, because our child is gone. I have no rest; and I told her that I would go to the city that I might, perhaps, find him there, should he be alive.

Clara. You seem to be certain of meeting him.

Thomas. I know of nothing, my lady. I wander along as the wind drives me. I know not whither I am drifting. This road leads to the city, then it goes into the wide, wide world, and there is where I will meet my son.

Clara. And do you expect to find him there?

Thomas. Perhaps, my child; perhaps some guardian angel will lead me to him. I live in hopes; that is all; that is all.

Clara. I have lost my father, but seeing you thus suffer, notwithstanding my own grief, I still have sympathy left for you. You are an honest man; you have led an upright life; and to see you in this condition, is enough to move a stone to pity.

Thomas. I bless you; and were Charles to know of this, he would value it more than anything on earth. You have loved him; he was such a good child, and I know he was kind to you; he was good to everybody. There never lived a better boy. I feel now what he was to me. Do not weep, my child; I could love you as my own. Heaven will be good to you. Bless you; you will be happy yet. You are young and strong; you will overcome your affliction. I must leave you; heaven will protect you; and if I should see my son, he shall know that I have met you.

Clara. If you do meet him, tell him that I sent him my greetings of love. Tell him that I have not forgotten him; that I will keep him in sacred memory as long as I live. Tell him to have courage; tell him to be firm, to live and hope. And yourself, sir, be courageous, and may heaven grant you protection.

[*Exit Thomas.*]

Clara. Poor old man, whose life seems to be hanging on a single thread, it is the faint hope of seeing his only son. He goes along and knows not where. Oh pity, pity! he is childish; he will soon lose his mind, and the grave will be his most welcome friend. And I, myself, live in hopes, in faith to see my love again, if not here, then in the world to come.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II.—*A room in the mansion of Loudon.*

Enter Mrs. Loudon and Inez.

Inez. I do not mind being disturbed from my sleep when I can be of assistance to you.

Mrs. Loudon. It is because I am not well.

Inez. You are nervously excited.

Mrs. Loudon. I have had such bad dreams.

Inez. Dreams mean nothing.

Mrs. Loudon. I always thought so myself, but now—

Inez. What causes you to think now otherwise?

Mrs. Loudon. I know not, myself; it was a dream, which makes my blood chill when I think of it.

Inez. Tell me what it was; I can, perhaps, explain it to you.

Mrs. Loudon. They were nightmares. I cannot repeat all; I

saw blood, skeletons, open graves and figures with ghastly piercing eyes, most horrible to look at.

Inez. Be quiet; I will remain with you.

Mrs. Loudon. Have you ever had bad dreams?

Inez. Dreams depend on our state of health, and the mode of life we lead. Dreams are the fleeting shadows of passing events. Children dream of toys and childish doings; youth, of pleasures, such as dances, love scenes, weddings and the like; and persons more advanced in years, of things that are more firm and real.

Mrs. Loudon. That must be so. I remember that my dreams were pleasant, when my surroundings were such.

Inez. Those late unfortunate scenes have so forcibly impressed themselves on your mind. There was the duel, then the calamities in South America, and those murders in our neighborhood. And as these events effect you in the day, they come back to you in the same manner at night, when you sleep, but in the form of dreams.

Mrs. Loudon. You speak so truthfully that I love to listen to you.

Inez. And their degree of force depends altogether on the condition of our nervous system.

Mrs. Loudon. Have you seen Clara of late, and how is she?

Inez. She grieves over the death of her father, and of the fate of her lover.

Mrs. Loudon. You have told her that I cannot see her, and no one else, that I am too unwell?

Inez. I have, Leonor, and she is satisfied.

Mrs. Loudon. How long has Mr. Loudon been dead?

Inez. Just eight days ago he was buried.

Mrs. Loudon. I was thinking it was but yesterday.

Inez. It is only after death that we find out what friends are; in real life we are too frivolous.

Mrs. Loudon. Was I ever frivolous?

Inez. We often say things which we do not mean. I know that you loved Mr. Loudon, more so than you know yourself.

Mrs. Loudon. Are you convinced of this?

Inez. I am quite certain.

Mrs. Loudon. What is the hour now?

Inez. It is about midnight.

Mrs. Loudon. Open the window, Inez, I want to take breath; the atmosphere is very close; see if a storm approaches.

Inez. The weather is perfectly clear. You are unwell.

Mrs. Loudon. Do not say I am unwell; I am well, perfectly well. I hate for people to be sick; then they languish on their beds, pine away, inch by inch, and die, and are laid in the dark cold grave, where worms devour them; and thus, everything of them, what they were, what they possessed, is wiped out forever. Oh, it is horrible! I shudder at the thought. I am not sick, I am well; I was never in better health in my life.

Inez. You are only restless.

Mrs. Loudon. Yes, restless, I am; restless is the proper name; restless I want to be; for I want to possess energy. I hate dull and lifeless people, they are good for nothing. I want to be active; I want to have something to do; one feels so much better by it; and what do you propose we shall do now to be active?

Inez. How would you like to read for a while; or shall I read to you?

Mrs. Loudon. This is an excellent idea: you will be kind enough to read and I will listen.

Inez. What shall I read?

Mrs. Loudon. Whatever you think is interesting.

Inez. Here is a book; it is a novel.

Mrs. Loudon. A novel! Nothing of that! I wish to hear nothing of love affairs; for mercy's sake, read nothing of that to me!

Inez. Do you like to listen to poetry?

Mrs. Loudon. That kind of reading was always rather dull to me. Poetry is sentimentality. Poetry treats on matters as they do not exist. Men speak in poetry as affectedly as women, and women like children. It is a distortion throughout. I have always found my poetry in life real, in beauty, in society, in wit, in activity; then there is a kind of poetry in music, flowers, nature herself, which is the grandest of poetry, and needs not the panygeries of men; do you understand me?

Inez. Then I propose that we take up something which has more substance; say history, it treats of facts as they occurred.

Mrs. Loudon. History contains accounts of wars; these remind me of bloody battles, where hundreds of thousands of people are slain, which breaks hundreds of thousands of hearts. No, I cannot bear that; suggest something else.

Inez. Well, then, a book on religion; the Bible, that will suit you better.

Mrs. Loudon. This is the worst of all; it speaks of ghosts and about graves and the dead. Impossible, I cannot bear it; it will set me in a fearful state of excitement. Away with that book! I cannot listen to it; I dread it.

Inez. You only imagine so.

Mrs. Loudon. You are superstitious Inez; but I overlook your faults.

Inez. We will not read at all; let us converse.

Mrs. Loudon. Do you believe in conscience?

Inez. Certainly, I do.

Mrs. Loudon. Do you think, that a king or army commander have any conscience when they slaughter thousands and thousands of people; when they have destroyed blooming fields and peaceful homes? or has the soldier conscience when he murders the best man on earth, or when, on his onward march, on the field of battle, he treads upon his dying friend?

Inez. This is a very corrupt world, and one often loses all faith.

Mrs. Loudon. I want to tell you something?

Inez. What is it, Leonor?

Mrs. Loudon. I do not like to live in this country; I detest the climate and hate its people.

Inez. Of course we like our own country best; and we also prefer to live amongst our own people.

Mrs. Loudon. For this reason we want to leave soon, for our home, in South America; we will search there for a spot where we can live happily together; we will select a piece of ground, where a small river or a brook with pure crystal water flows through; then we want plenty of meadow; then sufficient space for flowers and shrubbery; we want nice and broad walks laid out. There we want to be together; be like children, play like children, and live like children.

Inez. I shall do anything to make you happy.

Mrs. Loudon. And we will take our effects with us; we will leave nothing here; and we will live there like sisters; will we not?

Inez. My whole care is to see you satisfied.

Mrs. Loudon. My head is becoming heavy, and my eyes are growing weak.

Inez. You have a slight fever on you.

Mrs. Loudon. My whole body aches me; I am unable to remain up longer.

Inez. You have excited yourself too much with our conversation. You need rest, Leonor; lie down on your bed.

Mrs. Loudon. Your advice is good; lead me on! [Exit.

SCENE III. *In the swamps.*

Enter THOMAS and CHARLES.

Chas. We may take rest here. The bushes and trees hide us from being detected; also, the twilight protects us from being spied out. Now, dear father, you may speak to me. I presume you have recovered from your exhaustion; and first of all, let me know what motive has prompted you to come to me.

Thomas. I could no longer rest at home.

Chas. What a change has taken place with you; and that in such a short space of time! I see that my deed is written on your face, and that every furrow in it, speaks volumes. I ought to run away out of your sight. Oh, I wish, that the instrument with which I shed human blood had pierced through my own body! You can no longer bless me; you ought not to come to me. But I beg of you, father, have mercy, I am a living curse to myself.

Thomas. Charles, my son! This is not the time for complaining; this is the time for speaking.

Chas. Speak, then; I will not fill your ears with lamentations. I will listen to you; but tell me first, how came you to be here?

Thomas. At the place where you met me, there is a stone on

which I layed down to rest. I arose to take up my journey again and found you standing before me. My purpose was to see you; I did not know whether you were dead or alive; I had no longer any rest in me; an inward impulse drove me on; I have seen you; I am satisfied, whatever the fate may be, that is in store for us.

Chas. Your presence is like a God-send to me.

Thomas. What is your intention of doing, my son?

Chas. To remain here until the excitement in our neighborhood has cooled down; then I will give myself up to the authorities and await the sentence of the law. Oh, I could kill myself for having brought this calamity over your head, when I remember what you have done for me.

Thomas. And how do you pass your time?

Chas. I tell you of my surroundings, and you may judge for yourself. I find here malarious pools of stagnant water, poisonous weeds, and trees; the sky above, the earth beneath; sometimes I see a bird shooting through the air and watch its flight; then, there are frogs, wizards, water rats, and insects; all these, alternately, keeping me company.

Thomas. And no man has pity for you.

Chas. I need pity, father; I find it where you would least suspect it. Man has no pity, he will shun and avoid me; he is cruel. A stone is more accessible to pity. Here I may speak to the bushes, to the leaves, to the animals around me; they hear my tales of misery and do not turn traitors. In the night bad dreams haunt me, caused by a heavy conscience. I must forbear, I must not speak of myself, but of you, father. I am your only child, and cause you so much trouble and pain. However, we will waste no time in lamentations; but tell me, how affairs are at home; how mother is. I should have asked about her first, but I was so much absorbed with your own distressed condition.

Thomas. Like myself, she is well. What more shall I say?

Chas. Such messages will break the strongest heart.

Thomas. My son, we are living in misery.

Chas. Yes, father, if there is misery in this world, we are emptying the bitter contents of the cup to the very dregs; however, this is no time for complaining, but tell me how my beloved is

Thomas. She is well.

Chas. I should have listened to your heeding voice, and all this would not have happened.

Thomas. I came not to accuse you, Charles. I am fully reconciled to her. On my way here I met her; she is true to you, and sends you friendly greetings.

Chas. With all my woes I feel contented.

Thomas. Her father died a short time ago. He was slain in a broil, which he had with one of his neighbors.

Chas. Poor Clara; she too finds herself in a great calamity.

Thomas. Now, my son, what do you intend doing?

Chas. Ask me not, father, I am pursued day and night; every outlet is guarded. I will soon have consumed my last morsel, which, under disguise, and in the night, I was fortunate enough to procure from a family of emigrants traveling into the interior; and my destiny now is—the prison. And whither are you going, father?

Thomas. I shall go homeward. I will not live much longer. I have lived long enough—I have seen you.

Chas. I will remain here to-day. This evening or to-morrow I will leave my hiding place, and make the attempt to see my beloved once more.

Thomas. For your own safety I will leave you; the day is advancing, and should I be spied, it would be fatal to you. Farewell, my son.

Chas. I will go a few steps with you before we part.

[Exit.

SCENE IV.—*A field on the plantation.*

Enter INEZ and TOM, afterwards MRS. LOUDON.

Inez. Tell me, Tom, in what way or manner was your attention called to it.

Tom. I was sleep, an de door o' my cabin was wide open; all at once I wake an' somebody was a singin'; den I look out and saw de shine ob de light, and oh, wat I did see! de Lord forgives my sins; I sinks on de ground; dare, right dare I sees mistiss gwine to come up to me, wid a burnin' caudle in her hand, and I felt like I wers dead. Den mistess went by me and kept up a singin'; den I thought all de angels ob heabon had come down, just like Parson Smith preached about o'der Sunday from de Bible; and I am gwine to git up, cause I was on de ground, and come here to tell you mam. De Lord hab mercy! I neber seed such in my life, and neber wants to see it agin.

Inez. I ought to have looked through her apartments first.

Tom. I knows main, I's a big sinner; I's done many bad things in my life, but don't lie; I's an honest nigger; got very little whippin' when I's had a master. I's gwine to my grave, an if I tells lies de debil will catch me and burn me to charcoal.

Inez. I accuse you of no wrong, Tom; I only think you might have been mistaken.

Tom. Dar, she's coming agin; she will be here in a minute; she's behind de big oak tree; dare's de shine ob de candle; dare she come.

Inez. I am trembling in every nerve. Stand aside, Tom, she comes this way; a slight motion from us may drive her away. Oh, mercy! must it come to such an end! Stand aside and let us keep silent.

[Enter MRS. LOUDON with burning candle in hand.]

Mrs. Loudon. (to Inez) I saw you yesterday; I know you by name; you want to rob me, you horrible, you miserable bad thing! I want my dress; give me green or pink; my rings, too, I want. (To Tom) You need not laugh; come go with me; we will go to the gulf and gather shells; one, two, three, a hundred, ha! ha! You know it is so.

[Exit.]

Inez. Such a song was not chanted to her, when, as a babe, she laid in her cradle. Then sweet kisses were pressed on her face and lips, and beaming smiles were showered on her. She was the joy of her parents, their jewel, their consolation, their all; and now, in this far off land, with no one save my own poor self. Death is no comparison to such a fate!

Tom. Dar she is agin.

Inez. Let her again pass on.

Enter MRS. LOUDON.

Mrs. Loudon. I am going to a ball; I want flowers and evergreens; roses become me so well. On my wedding day I looked so beautiful; my hair and dress were so nice. You are my mother, don't scold me, I will be a good child; I will go to church and pray.

[Exit.]

Inez. We must follow and keep watch over her. She will soon be exhausted and will want to go to her room and go to bed. If she does not seek her apartments, we will try to lead her there.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE V.—*The grove near the plantation.*

Enter CLARA and CHARLES, afterwards THOMAS, INEZ, OFFICERS NEGROES, Etc.

Chas. My father brought me the message, that you still had faith in me; and I have come to this ground expecting to meet you, to thank you, and ask your forgivness.

Clara. You owe me no thanks, Charles; and I have nothing to forgive you.

Chas. You have lost your father; it pains me to see you grief-stricken.

Clara. And my mother is more than dead, she has lost her reason.

Chas. And you have come to mourn for me. I have robbed parents of their child, and brought misery on the heads of my own.

Clara. The hand of misfortune rests heavily upon us.

Chas. Forbear, Clara, I fear not the prison doors, but the woe I have given to others. My conscience is my greatest tormentor, and I find relief only in your love.

Clara. What is going on with you, dearest? does grief so much affect you, or do you think my love for you might cease? then take courage, and speak to me as you did of old.

Chas. I am becoming—fatigued.

Clara. You are becoming pale as death; your eyes are hazy.

Chas. I am in my last moments.

Clara. What! Are you taking your life, to leave me here forever? No, my love, I want to share with you to the end.

Chas. You must not; you cannot.

Clara. In life you were so generous; and on your approaching death you deny me my last sacred request; can you do it?

Chas. I am sinking fast; give me your hand. (*He reaches forth his hand—Clara discovers a phial and takes it.*)

Clara. And is this the drug that liberates you from all earthly burdens?

Chas. Give it back to me.

Clara. I cannot.

Chas. A curse be on me for having procured it.

Clara. And how came you with it?

Chas. On my flight from an apothecary—give it back to me!

Clara. (*partakes of the phial*) Now we are evenly mated.

Chas. Oh, what have I done!

Clara. Rest easy, my dear.

Chas. I cannot undo what is done. My strength is giving way; I feel the symptoms of death—pain everywhere. My eyes are growing dark—a few moments more—my head—give me your hand—farewell—Clara—farewell. [*dies.*]

Clara. This is death. Now you are free from all human shackles and prisons. To mother earth alone belongs your sacred body, and your spirit to another world. I am happy; I can close your eyes and imprint the last kiss of love on your brow. Farewell, Charles; I have been faithful to you, as you have been true to me. My strength is failing—the angel of death is near—I am coming—farewell—farewell. [*dies.*]

Enter THOMAS.

Thomas. Here they are together—asleep? No, they are dead! They are dead and gone! Death alone could give you peace. I bless you; you are my own, my children. Blessed was your coming into the world, and blessed be your going. Peace to you and to your ashes. [*Kneels down.*]

Officer No. 1. (*within*) In this direction the fugitive must be.

Officer No. 2. (*within*) He cannot escape us again.

Enter OFFICERS.

Officer No. 1. What is this? asleep? Young lady and—they are dead! What mystery is this?

Officer No. 2. Here is a phial; it is labled poison; that tells the tale.

Officer No. 1. All law is at an end, when death puts its hand between.

Enter INEZ.

Inez. You speak of death? It is so. Death after death, horror after horror. Woe and mourning are synonymous with this community!

Enter TOM and other NEGROES.

Tom. I know judgment day is a comin, an I's a lostsinner. Let's go on our knees, boys, and let's say prayers. 'De Lor' bless us; dey are over de river; dey are cross an happy. [Negroes kneel.

Officer No. 2. We must inform the community what dreadful event has again occurred.

Officer No. 1. Bad news is its own motor; but what we must do, is, to remove the bodies to suitable quarters.

Inez. This is the saddest event of all. They were the best and purest of those who have gone before. Dearly have they paid the penalty of their pure love, and thus their fondest hopes and sweetest dreams have come to naught. Oh, if tears were the emblems of mourning, I could shed them all the days of my life. Now, friends, we must bury this couple in the manner their pure hearts deserved. We will inter them side by side; so they wanted to live, and so have they departed from this world. And let a monument be erected that will mark the place where their earthly remains are laid to rest. But the best monument, more lasting than marble or granite, will remain in the memory and in the hearts of the people among whom they lived. As for myself, I will depart for my native home in the far off land of the south, and will take with me all sorrowful recollections from this country, and reflect thereon, during solitary hours, to the end of my life.

THE END.



ERRATA.

By OMISSION: Act I, Scene II, Page 13; the first persons in the scene.

Enter GENT and LADY.

Gent. I often wonder why our friends are always late.

Lady. It is not indifference, because all are overjoyed with our entertainments.

Gent. Is it on account of new styles being out?

Lady. It need not necessarily be so, because coming late seems to be style in itself.

Gent. Then style and pleasure are almost synonimous.

Lady. I believe it is, the world over.

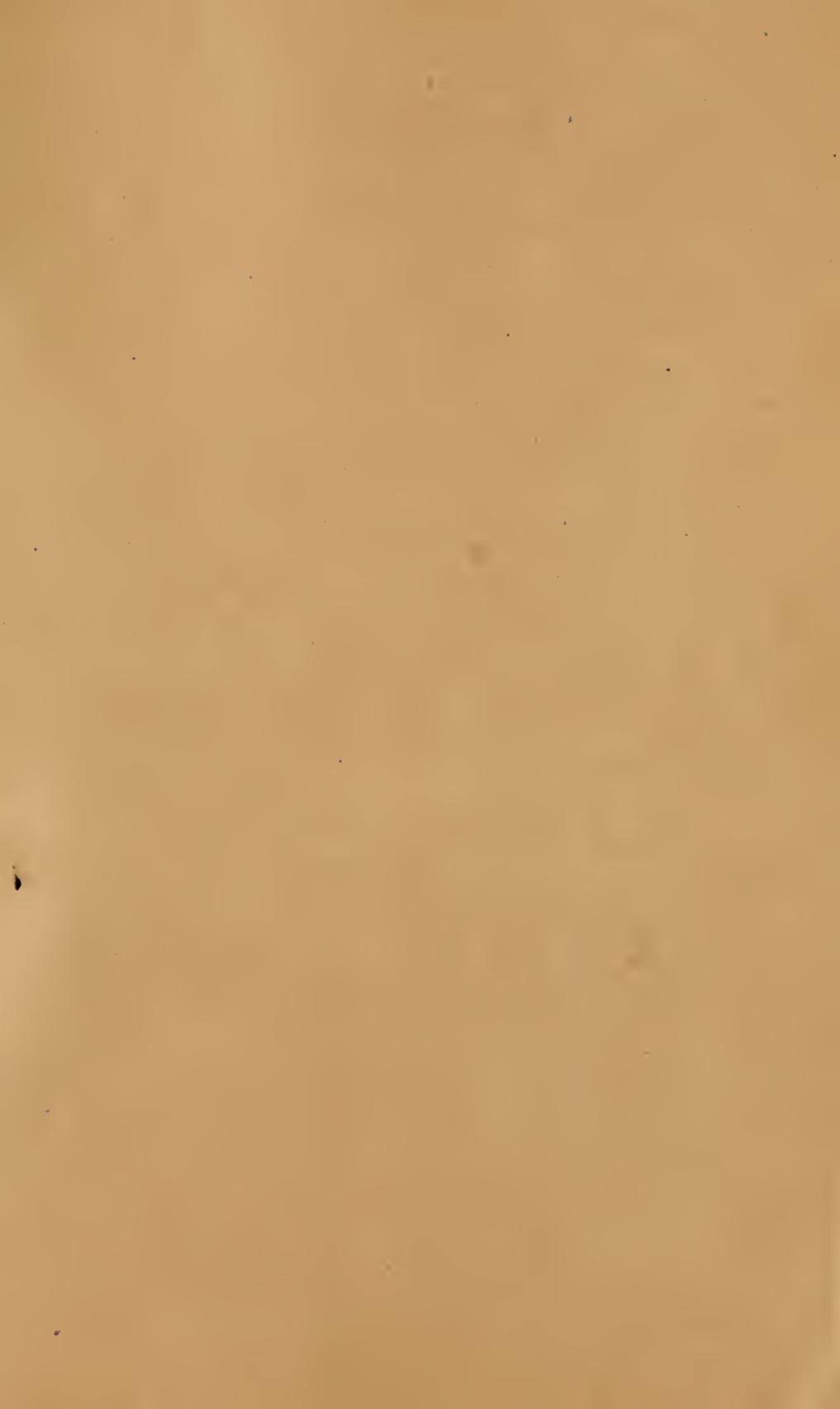
Gent. Suppose, in this age of progress, our ladies would make coming early fashionable?

Lady. Suppose our gentlemen would bring up the proposition formally?

Gent. I believe it would be a fruitless task, as the gods themselves could not effect the innovation.

By CORRECTION: Act III, Scene iv. Page 46; monologue of Mrs. Loudon. "What step is he now going to take;" the whole is void. the correction is:

Mrs. Loudon. Was ever such infamy resorted to! To me they come for advice in intrigues, in persuasion! "Resort to everything that is expedient;" said he: And I to be the vile instrument to carry out their purposes! I to be so devoid of feeling and sensitiveness to effect on another what I consider to be a heinous act done to me! Was human nature ever so abused and trodden under? and am I to be silent, or to help, to invent, to suggest, to persuade? Never! For that, I had rather see them hurled into the deepest abyss, and buried under the heaps of their own acts of infamy; here he comes.



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